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58th year of publication

Canadian church leaders witness AIDS pandemic in East Africa

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Alan Doerksen

TORONTO – AIDS is the most urgent problem facing the church in East Africa today, yet many Canadian churches are ignoring it. Because of this situation, World Vision Canada (WVC) recently took eight prominent Canadian church leaders to Uganda and Tanzania to witness first-hand the tragedy of the AIDS pandemic in East Africa.

WVC organized the trip "to provide a wake-up call for Canada's Christian community, which has seemed distanced and often disinterested in what is becoming creation's most overwhelming tragedy," says the agency in a press release. "The time has come for Canadians, and especially Christian Canadians to get involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, because we can make a difference, one vulnerable family at a time," asserts Don Posterski, WVC's director of church relations.

Deeply moved by what they saw

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), and Margaret Gibb, president of Women Alive, took part in the trip and were both deeply moved by what they saw in East Africa.

Hamilton joined the trip "to see the situation in the depths of its grimness and to see what can be done." The group met with ecumenical leaders in Uganda and Tanzania, she says. In Uganda, "we visited Rakai . . . where the AIDS/HIV crisis began" and met with local community health workers.

"We asked, 'How many of you have lost a family member [to AIDS]', and everyone raised their hand," reports Hamilton. Besides that, one quarter of the workers had adopted AIDS orphans. "These people are tremendously affected by the pandemic," Hamilton asserts.

The Canadian group met with several households which have been affected by the AIDS pandemic. "We met a grandmother named Zoe taking care of 19 grandchildren," says Hamilton.

68-year old Zoe has lost 23 immediate family members to HIV/AIDS, including her husband, reports WVC. As a result, she has been left to raise her 19 grandchildren, ages five to 17, on her own. Zoe has cancer, and does not know how much longer she has to live. But she doesn't fear death; her fear is that no one cares for her grandchildren after she's gone, reports WVC.

COURTESY WORLD VISION CANADA

68-year old Zoe (third from right), a woman who has lost 23 members of her family to HIV/AIDS, including her husband, and has been left to care for her 19 grandchildren alone. She lives in southern Uganda.

Child-headed families

"We also met two child-headed homes, both headed by boys about 14 years old," says Hamilton. "Parents' graves are right beside the house."

Another child-headed family was "living in just a shack." A teenage boy in that family was taking care of his two younger brothers, both of whom had malaria. Malaria is on the rise in that region because there are few adults available to cut back the bush, which prevents malaria, reports Hamilton. The oldest boy can only go to school two days a week because he needs to care for his brothers. A bicycle could help him get to school faster. There is "a huge need for bicycles" for people such as this boy, explains Hamilton.

Something else which can help alleviate AIDS-related problems in Africa is "a vaccine that can be given to [pregnant] mothers who are HIV-positive," says Hamilton. "World Vision is working on that as a Mother's Day campaign. Many lives will be saved."

Chris Berghuis, WVC's manager of church relations, tells more about his agency's new mother-to-child transmission program. "Through a simple drug treatment, you can reduce the probability of children getting AIDS by 50 per cent." This year, WVC is running a Mother's Day-related campaign which encourages Canadian Christians to "unite in prayer and some sort of financial commitment to women and children in Africa who have been ravaged by the AIDS pandemic," says Berghuis. WVC will reach out to mothers and orphans in Africa through a number of programs designed to ease their burden, including housing, health care, and education.

In East Africa, "the situation is extremely grim.... One-third of Africa is going to die," asserts Hamilton. "We saw widows, orphans — but we also saw what could be done."

Since returning to Canada, Hamilton has been considering what the CCC can do to help out.

See **CHURCH** *page 2...*

Classis Toronto confronts challenge on how to minister to gays

TORONTO — Classis Toronto of the Christian Reformed Church has responded to the decision of First Toronto CRC by urging it to repent of its action and rescind its decision.

A few months ago First Toronto sent a pastoral letter to the churches in its classis informing them of its decision to grant full membership, including church offices, to those homosexuals who are living in committed same-sex relationships (see CC, Dec. 2, 2002).

The pastoral letter called forth a lot of correspondence not just from churches and individuals in the same classis but also from other classes.

Besides urging the Council of First Toronto to repent from and rescind their action of June 10, 2002, Classis also moved to set aside a day "of prayer, listening and dialogue with all the churches of Classis Toronto" to "help our churches grow in ministry to and with gays and lesbians to foster in all of us the call to encouragement and loving ministry...."

Response expected in May

First Toronto is expected to reflect on the urging of Classis and respond at the next meeting to be held in May. In its open letter, First Toronto stated its desire to remain in the denomination and to be designated a "safe" church for homosexual Christians.

Carl Tuyl, pastor of First Toronto 1974-85, argued before Classis that the situation of First Toronto is unique and that it was necessary for the future of the congregation. The Council did not come to its decision overnight but discussed the issue and prayed about it for years. Henry Hofstra, an elder for First Toronto, said that further study of relevant Scripture passages was not going to alter things. While various delegates cited the CRC's 1973 Report on Homosexuality and the decisions made then, Rev. Nick Overduin of First Toronto charged that the measures of that report do not work.

Classis agreed that more talk on the issue is needed and that the church must not act hastily, but it was firm in upholding the position of 1973.

News

Church leaders struck by depth of loss in AIDS-affected families

... *continued from page 1*

"There is discussion within the council, and that's for the council to decide," she says. "The key message that I want to bring back to North America is there are concrete things that can be done." She cites the Biblical imperative "to care for widows and orphans."

Biblical imperatives

"All those Biblical imperatives run through my mind. We're called to care," she says.

Hamilton and a Jewish colleague are considering a bicycle-related initiative. "We're calling it For a Generation," she says. Because of the vast scope of the AIDS pandemic, it is more than just a short-term emergency. "This is not just 'give once and then move on to the next thing,'" she says. Hamilton plans to speak out more about this issue.

The Africa trip was a real eye-opener for Margaret Gibb. "I never realized how devastating the situation was in Uganda and Tanzania," she tells *Christian Courier*. She learned some telling statistics while on the trip. For instance, of Uganda's 24 million people, 10 per cent are orphans.

Like Hamilton, Gibb was very affected by visiting families who had been stricken by AIDS. "The biggest impression would be the effect of HIV/AIDS on women and children. It's devastating what's happening to them." In areas she visited, Gibb observed, "They don't test children [for HIV] because they're afraid they will be rejected by society."

COURTESY REV. DR. KAREN HAMILTON

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, centre, meets with two Catholic priest colleagues in Rakai, Kenya.

Besides that, "there's no welfare system for widows at all," says Gibb. And women who have suffered losses are affected by depression.

Poverty compounds AIDS problem

Poverty compounds the problem of AIDS. "In Tanzania, the annual income is $150 a year," explains Gibb. "If you're found to be HIV-positive, the chances of getting medicine are very limited."

Gibb was struck by the depth of loss people like Zoe, the grandmother, have had to face. "I can't conceive of a grandmother raising 19 grandchildren," Gibb asserts. "You reflect back: in my world in Canada, you think of someone who has lost a job, and maybe there's a death" of a loved one. But those two losses are small compared with the multiple losses of loved ones to AIDS suffered by families in East Africa.

After observing child-headed families in East Africa, Gibb says, "these teenagers have had to grow up real quick.... Their responsibilities are beyond their years."

Single-parent households

She also visited single-parent households like that of Veronica, whom she describes on the Women Alive web site as "a beautiful woman, 35 years of age who is raising four children on her own. Her husband died of HIV/AIDS five years ago. Veronica told us her story and it's a story of pain and suffering. She suffers from headaches and recurring fevers. She thinks she is HIV-positive. Her only hope is to see her children grow up.

"Her 13-year-old daughter told us: 'I feel very bad, I cry when my mother is sick. Sometimes I get angry because we only have beans to eat.' On their one-acre property, they have a house World Vision built for them — a very modest brick home with three small rooms, and a goat. The request to World Vision staff was for medicine for her headaches and a rope for her goat!"

Signs of hope

But, says Gibb, "I did see signs of hope." One is World Vision's education program, which teaches people about HIV/AIDS.

Describing WVC's programs in Africa, Berghuis says, "Everything we do is related to AIDS." One of WVC's goals for increased program effectiveness in East Africa is increased integration of HIV/AIDS initiatives into all programing. In Uganda, the agency's programs are based on prevention of AIDS, education and care. These have been "very successful," he says. There have also been very encouraging results in Kenya.

Berghuis observes that of the Christian leaders who went on this trip, "not one of them had had a conversation on HIV/AIDS in their church" until the trip. "This is something we cannot ignore."

Helping out those suffering from the AIDS pandemic in East Africa is "an opportunity for Canadian Christians to shine," says Berghuis. "We're planning a trip next February to see the differences Canadian churches have made."

Another positive sign is that churches in East Africa will not marry a couple unless they have been tested for HIV, says Gibb. This can help prevent the spread of AIDS.

In Tanzania, "they have a parliament of children," says Gibb. "They are speaking out. In the school they're looking for orphans and trying to get them help. They're envisioning a new kind of Africa."

In the Rakai region of Uganda, World Vision staff look for child-headed households and helps them out, explains Gibb. "They'll seek to build them a home, seek to get a sponsor."

Since returning to Canada, Gibb would like to take some action to help out people suffering from AIDS in East Africa. Women Alive is "working on an initiative right now," she reports. "We will be involved with women and children. We expect by spring 2004, we will have a women's delegation" to go back to Uganda.

"To those whom much has been given much will be required," she asserts. "The need for empowerment, support, practical assistance and friendship is critical. Canadian women can play a major role in bringing changes to the devastation of HIV/AIDS. Women Alive must be involved!"

Christian leaders challenged to respond to AIDS crisis in Africa

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Christian leaders in North America and Africa have been slow to respond to the AIDS crisis in Africa. But increasingly, Christian agencies in both continents are now responding, and have been greatly encouraged by the American government's recent decision to spend $15 billion on AIDS relief in Africa over the next five years.

During his annual address to the American people on Jan. 29, Bush proposed a $15 billion plan for AIDS relief that included $10 billion in new dollars to Africa and other places in the world ravaged by the disease, reports EP. The plan "more than triples the U.S. commitment to fight AIDS internationally," says Ken Casey, of World Vision International and special assistant to the President on AIDS. "It sends a message that America stands with Africa and the Caribbean in fighting this threat to economic security and political stability."

Bush specifically mentioned the tragedy in Africa of millions of children orphaned by AIDS. More support for drug therapy will help parents stay healthy and provide better lives than those lived by children whose parents have died from AIDS.

But Casey asserts, "The American church must come alongside their African brothers and sisters to provide hope and care for the dying and the orphaned, and a life-saving message of abstinence and fidelity."

A 2002 survey of U.S. adults showed evangelical Christians are significantly less likely than non-Christians to give money for AIDS education and prevention programs worldwide, reports Crosswalk.com. The survey, conducted by the Barna Research Group at the request of World Vision U.S., reported that three per cent of evangelical Christians plan to donate toward AIDS education and prevention internationally, compared with eight per cent of non-Christians.

Deeply troubling results

"We wanted to measure Americans' attitudes about and awareness of the international AIDS crisis," explains Richard Stearns, WVUS president. "Needless to say, the results are deeply troubling, given that 73 per cent of Americans — among the most charitable in the world — say they are aware or very familiar with the issue, but are still not likely to help the international AIDS crisis."

World Vision was one of the first non-government groups to respond to AIDS in Africa more than a decade ago.

Samaritan's Purse, run by Franklin Graham, has also taken up the challenge of addressing the AIDS crisis on Africa. Recently, Graham observed, "When AIDS first came onto the world scene, many Christians had a skewed view of the disease and whom it affected. For various reasons, most Christians, including myself, did not become actively involved in the fight against the disease. That was wrong and I must admit I feel quite differently now."

In an address given at the Prescription for Hope: International Christian Conference on HIV/AIDS last February, Graham said, "Often, when we have gotten involved, it has been to proclaim how to avoid contracting the disease, but we have shamefully little to say to those who are already infected and living with AIDS, usually without hope.

Sermons not enough

"Sermons about how to avoid AIDS are good," says Graham, "but provide no solace to those 40 million already infected with the virus. As the church of Christ, we must reach out with open arms in love, encouragement, and compassion rather than condemnation. Let's care for orphans; provide hospice care, medical treatment, educational and vocational training, and other skills and services."

Taking those words to heart, Graham's international relief organization, Samaritan's Purse, is actively involved on the front lines of the pandemic, reports Crosswalk.com. The organization's latest effort brought together 150 leading Christian HIV/AIDS

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News/Politics

Uganda successful in reducing AIDS rate

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workers from across Africa to attend Prescription For Hope — Africa. From Feb. 10-13, HIV/AIDS caregivers, pastors and health professionals met in Kampala, Uganda to share their successes and strategies.

Ken Isaacs, the international director of projects for Samaritan's Purse, told Crosswalk.com: "Uganda is the only country in the world demonstrating success in stemming their [AIDS] prevalence rate, which went from nearly 30 percent to about five per cent."

Bold, dynamic leadership

According to Isaacs, "Dating back to 1986-87, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has taken bold and dynamic leadership on the HIV/AIDS issue and he has never failed to bring it up in his speeches. He has really raised public awareness. His wife, Janet Museveni, has been a leading advocate in the Christian community for full-fledged action and responsibility. Both of them have heavily promoted programs based on abstinence, fidelity and monogamy. There is conclusive evidence that Uganda's HIV rate has gone down and it's due to the programmatic approach they have taken."

Isaacs explained that Mrs. Museveni is "very outspoken" in her belief in Jesus Christ. According to a Samaritan's Purse spokesperson, Museveni challenged the audience to resist complacency and indifference in the fight against HIV/AIDS in their countries: "We may look at our present efforts exclusively in terms of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, but God is doing a more permanent and lasting work in us as the Church. He is preparing us and building in us a culture of caring and oneness, which will stand us in good stead in the hard times ahead for the whole world. The Church must not be caught sleeping. Indifference would be unforgivable at such a time as this; for this is the time we must stand and be counted regarding what we believe and what we are willing to do for what we believe."

Franklin Graham said in a welcome letter to conference delegates, "The shining example of Uganda is a tribute to church leadership and influence that has not only transformed thousands of lives but has gained the attention of the world.... The world's finest doctors, richest donors, and strongest governments cannot match the worldwide Church in terms of earthly care and eternal hope. Our response to HIV/AIDS will be a defining moment in the history of the Church."

Last year, Stephen Lewis, the UN secretary general's special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, also challenged African religious leaders to "seize the leadership" in the struggle against the disease, saying that they had unique access to the grass roots and exceptional opportunities to influence politicians, reports ENI.

Church's voice muted

In a blunt message to a gathering in Nairobi of more than 120 African religious leaders from 30 countries last June, Lewis said that there was "no excuse for passivity or distance," given the scale of the pandemic.

Despite "notable exceptions", Lewis said, the "voice of religion has been curiously muted" in the fight against HIV/AIDS. "We know certain of the faiths have problems around sexual activity and the use of condoms and we know there are internal struggles around the leadership roles of women. I want to suggest, in the strongest possible terms, in the name of all children, infected or affected, [it is] time to seize the leadership, re-energize the struggle, and turn the pandemic around," he said.

In a final statement, the religious leaders acknowledged that they had not "fully unleashed" their "rich assets for action" and that until now, they had often "been reluctant to speak openly about HIV/AIDS." But that is starting to change for Christian leaders in Africa and North America.

Lost opportunity in Cyprus

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

It is almost 30 years since Cyprus was divided between the island's Greek-speaking majority and Turkish-speaking minority. Given my paternal roots in the island, and given that most of my relatives became refugees as a consequence of the events of 1974, it is perhaps not surprising that these contributed to my pursuing the study of politics as a full-time pursuit. Ever since then I have been following events there, watching to see whether, say, *The Globe and Mail* or the CBC thought it important enough to publicize a report on something occurring in Cyprus.

Now, however, the advent of the Internet makes it possible for anyone to follow developments in the remotest corners of the globe, irrespective of the judgements of the editorial staffs of the print and electronic media. Recently, therefore, I have been "tuning" in to **cyprusnews.com** and similar web sites to follow the crash unification talks spearheaded by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Sadly, these talks have failed, and the best opportunity in a generation for unifying the island may have passed.

Cyprus to join European Union

Cyprus is scheduled to join the European Union in May of next year. This invitation was extended last December. EU officials had expressed a preference that a united Cyprus be admitted, while conceding that, if this were not possible, the southern part of the island, the internationally-recognized Republic of Cyprus, would be admitted without the Turkish-controlled north.

This is when the UN got into the act. Early this year the world body announced an effort to negotiate the reunification of the island ahead of its entry into the EU. According to its plan, Cyprus would be governed as a Swiss-style federal state, with ethnic Greek and Turkish cantons roughly corresponding to the present de facto boundary between the divided communities. However, in recognition of the fact that Greek Cypriots make up some 80 per cent of the population, some territory would be transferred to the Greek side, most notably the Varosi section of Famagusta south of the old walled city – the once predominantly Greek district that was a centre of the tourist industry in the 1960s. This would allow a large number of Greek refugees – though not all – to return to their homes and properties. A new flag and national anthem for the island would be chosen, and an international competition was announced to solicit submissions.

Festering Cyprus stalemate

Public opinion polls showed a substantial majority of Turkish Cypriots in favor of the plan. They would, after all, stand to benefit from something that might bring a measure of the prosperity of the south to the impoverished north. However, as he has been doing for nearly three decades, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş vetoed the proposal, thus ending what might have been the best opportunity for a lasting solution to the festering Cyprus stalemate.

Neither side would have received everything it wanted from the UN deal. Not all Greeks would have been able to go home. Many Turks were reluctant to give up any territory at all. Yet it certainly would have improved on the present state of affairs.

A Saudi Arabian newspaper editorial suggests that, over the long term, northern Cyprus will not be economically and politically viable, and that unification, when it comes, will be on Greek terms. Turkey itself will not wish to remain in northern Cyprus indefinitely, particularly if this proves to be an obstacle to its entry into the EU. Both Greek and Turkish Cyprus have ageing leaderships that badly need an infusion of new blood. Short of this, it is difficult to see any movement to break the longstanding deadlock.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College. He and his father had submitted a collaborative entry into the anthem competition, which for the time being, of course, is now a dead issue.

CRWRC responds to African AIDS crisis

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – The AIDS pandemic in Africa is a major concern of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), so – like World Vision and some other Christian aid agencies – it is developing an integrated response to AIDS in Africa.

According to CRWRC, 70 per cent of all HIV-infected people in the world live in Africa, and there are more than 12 million orphans in Africa because of the AIDS pandemic.

CRWRC's vision for its HIV/AIDS response program is: "To develop and expand a response program within our Christian partners in Africa to facilitate and empower them to respond to HIV/AIDS in efforts aimed at preventing the spread of AIDS, supporting people living with AIDS, and supporting families affected by the disease," reports the agency's web site.

Uniquely designed program

The program is "uniquely designed to provide in-depth support to rural family structures and work against their disintegration due to HIV/AIDS.... Improved pastoral care and counseling, reductions of the stigma attached to AIDS, support for home-based caregivers . . . will all help to maintain family integrity. But perhaps the most critical component of our family-targeted plan is our focus on children.... Through our partners, we can mobilize churches and communities to design orphan support strategies that will keep families intact."

CRWRC's key objectives with this program include:

- developing an early primary school curriculum to focus on HIV/AIDS prevention through value-based behavior change and better understanding of sex education;
- mobilize our church partners to support child-headed households physically, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and socially;
- empower the existing health care system to administer medicines;
- mobilize resources to engage orphan care with particular emphasis on nutrition and school fees;
- mobilize church leadership to respond positively to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and eliminate the current stigma attached to the disease;
- develop support programs for people living with AIDS that focus on nutrition and hygiene;
- mobilize our church partners to respond more effectively to the AIDS crisis by incorporating appropriate gender and justice advocacy initiatives throughout all aspects of the HIV/AIDS response.

Editorial

On distancing ourselves from Bush's war

Harry der Nederlanden

As I sit down to write this editorial, the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq is only hours away. President George W. Bush has given up on the UN and issued a direct ultimatum. Only the departure of Saddam and his sons will stave off war and that does not seem likely.

No one I know is happy about the prospect of war, and we must not suppose that the U.S. administration is eager to risk the lives of its young men and women on the other side of the Atlantic either. Like it or not, in some way we are all involved in this war and its consequences.

There has been a lot of posturing in the UN of late. While Britain and the U.S. beat the drums of war, France and Germany posed as diplomats. Actually, even they have admitted that diplomacy by itself has been ineffective with Saddam; it has been diplomacy backed up with the threat of war that has produced some very modest results.

The risks of this war are great. Daunting. But there are great risks attached to the alternative, too.

Our clever Prime Minister has found a way to wash his hands of the whole affair: Canada stays out by appealing to the UN; since the latter has not passed a resolution explicitly authorizing this war, Canada will not go to war. So can we now righteously stand by with clean hands, while pointing to the bloody hands of George Bush?

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF
Editor: Harry der Nederlanden *editor@christiancourier.ca*;
Journalist, Layout Designer: Alan Doerksen *journal@christiancourier.ca*;
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden *subscriptions@christiancourier.ca*;
Accounts Manager: Ineke Strayer-Medcalf *accounts@christiancourier.ca*

REGIONAL REPORTERS
Jeff Hoogendoorn, Victoria; Jacky Huberts, Langley, B.C.; James Kwantes, Red Deer, Alta.; Stephen VanHelden, Calgary; Gordon Legge, Calgary; Jessie Schut, Edmonton; Valerie Walker, Halifax; Robert VanderVennen, Toronto; Margaret Dinsdale, Toronto.

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This has never been a simple choice between killing people and letting people go on about their lives in peace, as Harry Antonides has so eloquently pointed out. Nor is it simply a choice between their lives or ours, as it is in most wars. Neither should we cling to the foolish notion that peace is secure if only we leave Saddam alone, for he will not be content with torturing and killing friends and enemies within his own borders forever.

Even under the inspections and sanctions, people were dying in Iraq — 5,000 a month just counting young children. If we leave Saddam alone, the killing will go on. It will go on because Saddam will not give up his driving ambition to build up his power enough to be able to defy any checks on his ambitions from the outside, whether by the U.S. or the UN.

Modeled himself after Stalin

Those who have followed this man's career, written with the pain and blood of others, do not hesitate to compare him to Hitler and Stalin. In fact, he has deliberately modeled his strategies for consolidating power after Stalin. A PBS documentary on Saddam's rise to power showed footage of an assembly he presided over immediately after his coup. A huge hall was filled with Iraq's leaders. Saddam sat up in front like a judge. One by one he read out the names of men he did not trust, men he feared. One by one they were led out and never heard from again. Some of them were close colleagues and friends of his and pleaded to be spared. The proceedings were filmed and televised across the country.

This was a typically Stalinist trick to strike terror into the ranks of the leadership. And this happened not just once. Terror was his weapon of choice not just at the levels of leadership but throughout the country. Iraqis, even those in the Ba'ath party, are ruled not first of all by loyalty but by fear. Saddam is not just another dictator who offends our democratic sensibilities; Bush is right in calling him evil.

Bush has been inconsistent

But Bush's critics are right that "evil" is not a very useful category in terms of international relations. Evil raises its head everywhere, and it is difficult to quantify. We demand legality. And Bush has been inconsistent in how he justified this war: first, the direct link to Al-Qaeda; then Iraq's refusal to comply with the UN order to disarm; then the threat of imminent aggression against the U.S.

Each has only dubious force. Although the authority of the UN as the legislator of the world is hardly established, most of us would feel more comfortable with military action if it had been authorized by the Security Council.

Yet, it is largely due to the failure of the UN and of Europe that this new round of hostilities with Iraq has become necessary. The sanctions and inspections set up after the Gulf War were meant to last only a few months. Iraqi officials were supposed to lead inspectors to the weapons of mass destruction, supervise their destruction, and then life in Iraq was supposed to get back to normal.

Within weeks after signing the deal, however, Saddam was already playing games with the inspectors – refusing to co-operate, hiding weapons, impeding their searches and finally simply refusing to allow inspectors into certain facilities. When the inspectors appealed to the Security Council for help, what did it do? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

A few months after being soundly defeated for committing aggression against one of his neighbors, Saddam was rid of UN inspectors. Even while they were there, he killed tens of thousands of marsh Arabs and Shi'ites to reestablish his reign of terror, and his troops sent millions of Kurdish men, women and children fleeing through the mountains while helicopters strafed the roads. Have we already forgotten those horrific images?

Bush motivated by American idealism

Opponents of the war and critics of Bush, not convinced by the rationales given for war, are very busy looking for deeper, darker motives. He's in cahoots with the oil companies, or with Israel, or just intent on extending the American empire; he's driven by religious fanaticism or a need to avenge his father.

The truth is much simpler. George Bush is motivated by American idealism. He doesn't pay a great deal of attention to specific legalities because what outrages him is Saddam's offenses against humanity, which ultimately violate not just human law but transcendent law. Someone recently passed on to me an exchange he heard on the Fox News channel:

Commentator 1: "Don't the Europeans hate Bush because they think he's a cowboy?" Commentator 2: "They don't hate him because he's a cowboy. They hate him because he's a Christian."

A great many intellectuals in the West are convinced that the ultimate source of violence among nations is the belief in ultimates. They refer to this as fundamentalism. The only hope for peace, as they see it, is pragmatism, that is, leaving all ultimates out of the picture. It is ultimates that lead to ultimatums.

Many humanitarians have urged the West to address the deeper causes of terrorism and of hatred for the West. By this, they mean we must find ways to share our prosperity with those countries where there is so much poverty and unemployment. That is actually what Bush aspires to do. As he and his administration see it, however, what will make these countries prosper is replacing despotic government with self-government – democracy. Only this releases the initiative and creativity of a people. And this in turn is the way that leads to prosperity.

This involves a definite view of human nature: that all humans flourish when they are free, and that a free people is not fueled by resentment and hate. Democracy is the route to and the root of peace and stability for the Middle East and for the world.

It's a bold faith and vision that has led Bush to stubbornly pursue his course to remove what he sees as the fundamental source of instability in the region – despotism. It takes huge risks. It is an impatient policy and undertakes nation-building on a scale that America itself undertook more than 200 years ago.

I'm afraid, however, that it does not sufficiently take into account the history and religion of the peoples of the region. This is empire building not of the territorial kind but of an ideological kind. America was founded on some such ideology, such a dream shared by many different peoples. But can it realize that dream on behalf of others?

We can hope against hope that Bush in his naivete and optimism sees something we've missed. And we can now only pray that he succeeds in giving the Iraqi people hope and a new future. It is a godlike task.

Letters

CRC leaders write to PM, churches on Iraq issue

In view of the impending war with Iraq, leaders of the CRC have drafted two letters: one to its own members and, in Canada, one to the government.

CRC letter to Prime Minister

March 12, 2003
Dear Prime Minister:

You are in our thoughts and prayers in this turbulent time in the world community. In particular we pray that God will give you the blessings of wisdom and discernment both in your interactions with world leaders and in the decisions that must be taken about Canada's actions on the world stage.

You are undoubtedly aware that the Christian community in Canada is engaged in prayer and dialogue for the cause of peace and justice. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) supported the church leaders letter of the Canadian Council of Churches that was sent to you on February 28. In a recent pastoral letter concerning the impending war in Iraq, the CRC Board of Trustees encouraged church members in both the U.S. and Canada "to pray, to reflect and to work with joy and confidence for justice and for peace."

Indeed we pray that the light of Christ's peace will overcome the looming clouds of war.

A wise contribution to security

Your government's pursuit of diplomatic solutions to the Iraq crisis, particularly in commitments to a UN-based multi-lateral approach, is a wise contribution to human security in that troubled region. U.N. leadership is critical as a means to achieve lasting disarmament, to minimize potential regional destabilization, and to bring peace and justice to the people of Iraq — we therefore urge your continued commitment to UN processes and actions in this troubled time.

The Iraqi people have suffered much: dictatorship and its excesses; the psychological and physical trauma of war; and debilitating sanctions (to which the regime has refused to seek remedies) have eroded human rights and human security within Iraq. It is undeniable that this situation needs to be addressed for the sake of the Iraqi people.

Human rights should be strengthened

Should the Security Council impasse be resolved, and disarmament efforts continue, there must be accompanying efforts to strengthen human rights and human security within Iraq. This could be effectively initiated through committed and vigorous international dialogue to implement General Assembly (57/232 - 2002) and Security Council (668 - 1991) resolutions concerning human rights in Iraq. Implementation of these resolutions will be a significant challenge with or without Saddam Hussein in power and should, therefore, be pursued with a vigor and a commitment equal to the efforts to achieve disarmament. We fear that failure to do so will perpetuate human insecurity and destabilization in the region.

We urge you then to continue your courageous leadership in seeking diplomatic solutions to the disarmament (of weapons of mass destruction) of the Iraqi regime. We further call on you to make use of your international stature to urge world leaders to make human rights and human security primary concerns in dialogue and action concerning Iraq. Please be assured again of our prayers for you and your colleagues in this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Rev. William Veenstra,
Canadian Ministries Director

CRC letter to congregations

Pastoral Letter March 3, 2003
From: the Board of Trustees
Dear Congregations,

Because we live in a critical moment of history, we, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, urge the church to continue to pray, study, and reflect on what our denomination has said over the years concerning war and peace. We ask the church to do this particularly in the light of the reality of the war on terror and (as we write this) the distinct possibility of a war with Iraq. Continue to pray for the leaders of our countries and of the world as they exercise their responsibility to govern for justice and peace.

The rising tide of anarchy and terror with which many countries have lived for years has reached our shores. Many of us now, for the first time, know the names and faces of victims. Many of us in North America are angry and afraid; afraid for ourselves, our society, and the world.

As we watch countries prepare for war, some of us hear a call to support our governments in this action; others hear a call to question and resist. Some of us — our sons, daughters, husbands and wives — have been called to active military duty. The church is called to pray and pastorally care for our members in the military as well as those who object to and work against this war.

Decisions on war and peace are always grave and usually complex. Because of this, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has spoken several times and at length on matters of war and peace (synods 1939, 1977, 1982 and 1985). This material is available at **www.crcjustice.org**.

Prayer, reflection, discussion

We urge all CRC congregations to engage in prayer, reflection, and thoughtful discussion and to assist members as they discern their own consciences and God's will in the matter of the war on terror and the war in Iraq.

We affirm that as citizens of Christ's kingdom and of nations we have a right and responsibility to participate in critical national discussions on war and peace. These decisions are not merely individual political decisions. They are moral decisions because they involve life, death and justice. We are also aware that as synod affirmed in 1977:

"Weighty moral decisions are made responsibly before the face of God only if the prayers and counsel of the covenant fellowship are sincerely sought and lovingly offered." (Acts of Synod 1977, p. 46)

It is in this spirit that we lovingly and urgently call the church to reflect on our commonly held principles as enunciated by Synod 1977:

"If the nation has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church:

a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?

b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?

c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?

d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?

e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?

f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?

g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?

h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?

i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations?" (Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 46-48)

Think and talk broadly, deeply, and in love on these matters

We urge you to continue to pray, think and talk broadly, deeply, and in love on these matters as citizens of Christ's kingdom, members of his church, and those called to be salt and light in this sin-damaged world. We ask you to do this together in the power of the Prince of Peace, because:

"We who claim his name must live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace loving, harmonious living, and must also privately and publicly denounce war and strive to prevent it by prayer, by redressing the grievances of oppressed peoples, by prophetic calls to peace, by urging the faithful exercise of diplomacy, by entering the political arena ourselves, and by strong appeals to all in high places to resolve tensions by peaceful means. Christians must be reconcilers." (Acts of Synod 1977, p. 588)

We do live in a critical moment, yet our world belongs to God and our hope is in him. With this sure knowledge we encourage you to pray, to reflect, and to work with joy and confidence for justice and for peace.

For the Board of Trustees of the CRC,
Edward Vandeveer, chairman

Read more letters to the Editor on page 6.

For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send it by fax to: (905)-682-8313, or by e-mail to: editor@christiancourier.ca

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Letters

Democratic Iraq would decrease terrorism

The influential columnist and CNN commentator Charles Krauthammer unabashedly states that Iraq, as we know it, is a murderous threat to civilization (*Christian Courier*, February 17, 2003). Mr. Krauthammer's words should be reread by all those who are still in possession of the reference issue of *Christian Courier* for no other reason than to ponder the significance of his thoughts.

Hawks, doves or neutral

It seems to me that all other dialogue about the pros and cons of war to resolve the enormous geopolitical conflict are only of secondary importance. The war issue is currently front and centre on the minds of nearly all the citizens of the world and the issue has already caused great divisiveness between leaders of nations and within groups of citizens of diverse nations. Rarely has a political issue been so passionately taken at heart.

Mr. Krauthammer places the core of the dilemma central and by doing so he affords us the opportunity to think deeply about the personal choice we face, that is whether to side with the hawks, the doves or to remain neutral on the issue. The latter is the path most of us will follow, but to many people, including myself, neutrality is an impoverished option given the uncompromising nature of the conflict.

A conflict of ideologies

What does Mr. Krauthammer bring to the forefront that is so important for us to take note of? Simplified, he reduces the problem to the millennia-old conflict between the Settlers and the Bedouin of antiquity. The former, led and fed by a unique monotheism that opened itself up to all rationalistic delights, ultimately culminated in modernity and technological wonders of today. The latter, having been denied that route, remain captives and suffer "frustrations, failures and fantasies." Mr. Krauthammer believes that the two ideologies have reached a breaking point and that the conflict can now only be resolved by declaring war. Seen that way, it is nothing else but a religio-ideological conflict. Why, one may ask, can the two ideologies not co-exist?

Mr. Krauthammer's answer is that "those people who advocate deterrence or détente are living in a dream world." The domination system in Iraq is "reckless and ambitious" and failure to fight would bring "grave consequences" he says.

What a quandary!

And there we have it. Co-existence and gradual change can only succeed if the Baghdad regime is altered to a democratic model and their weaponry nullified. The same would hold for all other nations who pose an armed threat to our Western notion of freedom. What a quandary we are in!

Christianity at crossroads

Mr. Krauthammer's position seems so clear and so credible and so enticing and yet it conjures up that long-standing advice of another son of Israel who wants us to turn the other cheek. How impractical an advice. Anyone who does not struggle with the tenets of the Christian faith at such a crucial time as this is not serious about his/her confessions.

I, for one, find it horrendously difficult to conclusively formulate my thoughts.

Even though I wholeheartedly endorse the teachings of rabbi Jesus, it seems cheap and flippant and inappropriate to simply utter the New Testament love phrases and leave it at that.

The choice must be an agonizing one because it does affect more than one's own hide.

I would like to see an articulated and serious discussion ensue in the pages of this paper with particular emphasis on what practical guiding light genuine Christian convictions can bring to add clarity to our thinking. Ordained ministers could share some words of wisdom.

Perhaps in another million years or so we will have discovered a way to establish an altruistic and caring global society, but in the meantime our choice seems limited to either fight and live or to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. Christianity does not come cheap. I am much interested in what other readers of *Christian Courier* have to say.

George Visser,
Sarnia, Ont.

God is not in the camp of any country or government

Re: Seeing God as 'a kind of mascot'

Christians live in many countries. Large numbers of Christians live in Canada, the United States, Iraq, China and virtually every other country. The Christian Church is transnational. It is, therefore, wrong to hitch the mission of the Church to the well-being and particular interests of any one country. The cause of the Christian Church is much greater than the cause of any one country or alliance. Throughout history numerous political leaders have tried to fuse their cause with the cause of the Christian Church. Such attempted linkages have not worked.

Bush uses evangelical language

In our own day U.S. President George W. Bush has repeatedly used the language of evangelical Christianity to strengthen his arguments. While it is highly commendable when political leaders seek to incorporate high Christian ethics in their policies and actions, serious questions must be asked when any national leader claims to be a divine agent or even implies that he or his government is God's chosen participant in some providential plan.

When the government of any country claims that its policies, particularly its foreign policies, are distinctively righteous, that it is the power of light combating the powers of darkness, then Christian spokespeople must remember that all national governments are less than altruistic. In practice, governments all too often merely advance their own interests. Moreover, they all have some darkness in their own political perspective and historical record.

When the government of one country claims God as a modern-day "mascot" (Toronto Star, Feb. 23, 2003), patron, or even as ally, it ignores the fact that God does not describe himself that way. God, clearly and unequivocally, describes himself as the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords, who will judge all people and all authorities. God's standards are righteousness, justice, peace, and respect for human dignity. God is not in the camp of any country or government.

While it may happen, as in Old Testament times, that God decides to use one country to punish another country for its evil ways, it is inappropriate for any government or country to describe itself in such terms. That is strictly God's prerogative.

God's standards have not changed

In keeping with the biblical imperative which calls all people and all institutions to live by the godly principles of justice, righteousness, truth, compassion and the pursuit of peace, we remind all peoples, all countries and all governments that, in this present explosive situation, God's standards have not changed.

All authorities must work hard to prevent the terrible tragedy of war. Rather than invoke God as a supporter of one side in a crisis which seems to point to war, all national leaders, and especially those who claim to be Christians, must remember that God's ethical standards as well as their accountability to God have not changed. Those who try to prevent a war are more to be revered than those who concentrate on trying to win a war.

John H. Redekop, Ph. D.,
Past President, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada,
Professor Emeritus (Political Science), Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont.

(This article first appeared in the Toronto Star, Feb. 23, 2003)

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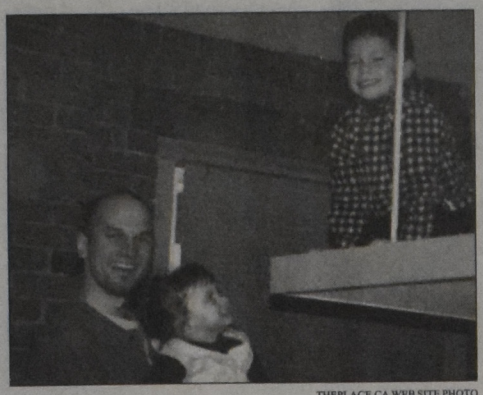
Ministry/Opinion

'The Place' – *an honest, creative church for a new world*

Peter Schuurman

Church leaders are looking for glittering images of ecclesiastical success that they might imitate. On the West Coast of Canada there is a church that is doing things differently. The goal is not middle-class shine, but a raw, stripped-down approach to Christian fellowship. "The Place," not far from the University of Victoria, is no grand show, but it is hard to find a seat.



THEPLACE.CA WEB SITE PHOTO

Randy Hein, one of two full-time staff at the Place, with his kids.

Relaxed, unpretentious

This "community within a church" is hosted by the non-denominational Lambrick Park Church, and uses their sanctuary space for weekly Sunday night gatherings. If there is a dress code, it is jeans and a shaved head. The music is upbeat: a mix of Christian, mainstream (eg. U2), and home-grown. Everything from announcements to sermon is relaxed and unpretentious.

One of the announcements on this February Sunday night is regarding a documentary on drug abuse that is showing in a local theatre. "I think we should go," says the pastor, "and check out the discussion forum afterwards." There are a few more announcements and then someone says, "Check out our web site for details, and please turn off your cell-phones." The sermon is on Exodus 15 and 16, and the topic is "tests". After a short comedy-routine on the speakers' many failed drivers' tests, he launches into a story-by-story exegesis of the Israelite's sojourn in the wilderness. Regarding the manna and quails, he says, "God provides for us in some pretty bizarre ways." Regarding all the wilderness tests, he concludes, "This is the purpose of the test of life: God is fitting you for a promised land. Will you trust and obey him?"

Pastor as jester in jeans

What attracts this standing-room only crowd of 600 twenty-something young adults? The web site lists four core values: orthodoxy, engagement (with broader culture), community, and beauty. But the front of their introductory brochure sums it up best: "exploring authentic faith." The Place accepts you as you are: broken, searching, sinful.

"The gift this congregation has given is that I'm allowed to be myself," says Randy Hein, one of two full-time staff at the Place and generally known to be the visionary although "reluctant" pastor.

"Some pastors are lonely, but I want to do, play, and be church with my friends. Some pastors are dishonest – not allowed to be vulnerable – but I want to lead out of weakness and vulnerability. I want to take God seriously, but not ourselves. I'm not the authority. I'm more of the jester."

You would not know Hein was the leader of this Christian community experiment. His name is hard to find on the literature. He does not always preach. When he does come up to make announcements, his unbuttoned flannel shirt and goofy antics grate against all ministerial stereotypes. He has degrees in philosophy and theology, but he does not advertise them. He only mentions his inspirations as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jacques Ellul, and Brian McLaren, when pressed.

"The emphasis must be on the community," he insists. "The Place is not just that Sunday night service," he explains. "It's the drink and fellowship afterwards at the pizza joint. It's the small groups, the Koinonia Garden that harvests vegetables for the poor."

He adds that the mix of church kids, drug dealers, addicts, anarchists, single mothers, and navy personnel that make up the community would not come to just a conventional church worship service. One of their original songs puts it this way:

Might not fit in anywhere
Might be tired of being scared.
But grace is for the weak
Rest is for the weary
And Solace for the freaks
And the best is for the needy.

Generationally exclusive?

When asked about the lack of generational diversity in The Place (the average age is about 25), Hein says they never promote this community in age-specific terms. "In fact," he defends, "we deliberately communicate a value for the elderly. They know I have mentors who are over 60. We know we are young in faith and maturity, and we have to be careful."

The Place may not wave the banner of youth, but they do certainly promote and celebrate the gift of creativity. Art exhibits, special concerts, and open mike evenings are part of the regular venue. The Place has also produced its own worship CD entitled "Under the Rubble." Additionally, they have just come out with the second issue of their own journal of poetry, art and writing called *Disclaimer*. "Café Suburbia" is a warm, candle-lit space down the hall where one can enjoy a specialty coffee, pizza, or piece of home-made cake after a service or concert.

"I was at a conventional church this morning," says one man in a Hawaiian shirt with a mocha. "It was dry and boring. I come here because its uplifting."

"Yeah," says a Navy man beside him. "This place is alive."

Away from Christian subculture

The Place isn't all novelty, though. They read scripture, pray, take an offering, baptize, provide childcare, and celebrate communion every other week. They have two leadership teams: one is the vision leaders (the "elders") and the other is the core leaders (the "deacons"). Their web site (**www.theplace.ca**) gives a clearer picture of what is behind this movement: its begins with a deep dissatisfaction with the church today, and more specifically, the Christian sub-culture the leaders grew up in.

Writes Hein, "They had TV, we created 'Christian TV.' They had rock, we had 'Christian rock'. We just imitated everything that the world did. Only it wasn't as good. It was just more sanitary."

The Place grieves the cultural life of the church, "where everything seemed so second rate, almost dishonest." This is their vision: "We desire — we are striving — to be relevant. To show Jesus is real and accessible to this post-Christian generation. We desire to engage the culture that we live in. We are skeptical-irreverent — but it has made us uncomfortably honest. We are willing to take risks and explore."

The Place is an eclectic mix of the loud and celebratory and the liturgical. It wants to be a safe place where questions can be asked. It strives to be a community of love and dialogue. In one sentence, this is the difference with the corporate-style churches: "We are more interested in something that is honest than something that is polished."

Dissatisfied with dissatisfaction

The Place is a risky venture that does not attract every demographic in town. Another young Navy man in town declines the invitation to check it out. "The fact that they are 'dissatisfied' with the church says everything," he explains. "That's not me. I like the hymns and the organ. And that they are self-described as 'irreverent' – I don't like that."

One may question many aspects of this endeavor: whether it is centred on a personality or entertainment, what deeper theological tradition it expounds, and how discipline, accountability, and stability are valued and implemented. Its future is uncertain, but no one questions the organic nature of this new community. Organic, after all, is culturally savvy. And dissatisfaction? That's where church reformers like Calvin began as well, both vocationally and theologically.

Incidentally, The Place is hosting someone who talks at length about a "new reformation," namely pastor and writer Brian McLaren. A conference entitled "New World, New Church" will be held at The Place May 1 and 2, and McLaren is the featured speaker.

"We want to engage the culture in its language, we want to be a beacon of light in a dark place," muses Hein. "Anything that perpetuates that light, no matter how little, we want to continue that."

The injustice of food insecurity

Wayne deJong

The equivalent of a third of the population of Canada died last year, of preventable causes. Not much has been done about it. Another third will die this year. Thankfully, for some, this did not happen to us here in Canada — but around the world, 12 million people did die from malnutrition and related causes, at the rate of 34,000 people per day. That this horrendous fact does not fill our newspapers every day, and is not the first item on the priority list of every person, church, and government in the world, is the greatest mystery and travesty of our time. What would Jesus do?

Estimated 840 million undernourished

According to the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002," an estimated 840 million people are undernourished. The majority of these people live in rural areas of developing countries and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Small-scale agriculture provides most of the jobs and much of the national income in poor countries. The poorest of the poor are women, who do most of the farming in the poorest nations of Africa and South Asia. Of the urban poor, a large percentage are people who have fled the countryside because of lack of food and income earning potential. These millions of people face chronic food insecurity, not because of population levels, or geography, or climate, but because of injustice — which keeps them poor and makes them vulnerable to almost everything.

What are the main causes of food insecurity and hunger in a world of plenty?

- **Poverty:** Obviously, those who cannot produce enough food, or earn enough income to purchase sufficient food, face food insecurity. Many people, however, live in poverty because of the factors that follow....
- **Conflict:** War and civil strife were the major causes of food insecurity in 15 countries that suffered exceptional food emergencies in 2001 and early 2002. When peace is lacking, the poor are usually the innocent victims who suffer the most.
- **Natural disasters:** According to the International Red Cross, in each year of the 1990s, an average of 211 million people were hit by natural catastrophes — seven times the number of those killed or adversely affected by conflict. These disasters seriously impacted arable land, food productivity, and income. The poor are the most

Continued on page 17...

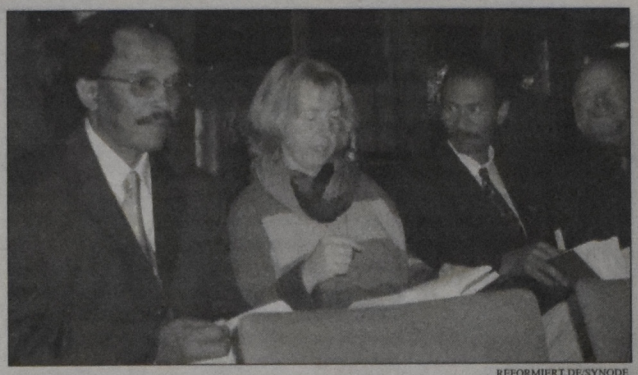
Church

Racially divided church in South Africa approaches unification

JOHANNESBURG (REC) — National Moderators of all four Dutch Reformed denominations in South Africa met for the first time in January to discuss church unity. Representatives from all four considered the meeting a breakthrough, but all cautioned there were obstacles still ahead.

For some years, three of these churches have held unification talks. These three were the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA). These talks have been part of the outflow of the ending of apartheid in South Africa. Churches that were split along racial lines in that era are now working to join together again.

The fourth church, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), is a "continuing" church. Its members stayed out of the union of 1994, when the then-larger DRCA joined the Dutch Reformed Mission Church to form the URCSA.



REFORMIERT.DE/SYNODE

James Buys (second from right), moderator of the URCSA, meets with other South African church leaders.

Unity conversations difficult

Afterwards, the continuing DRCA and the URCSA became involved in a legal dispute over the name and property. Although the main issue was settled in 1998, numerous smaller disputes about local property are still active. These disputes made unity conversations between the two difficult.

In the last couple of years, talks among the four churches have changed their format. After official talks kept breaking down, the churches tried a less official meeting, a convent, to build understanding. They held convents at local levels in the north and the south, and one convent included persons from the DRCA. Then at its October synod last year, the DRC recommended the use of convents at the national level. Convents would include many people from each church, and would make recommendations to official channels of the church.

Confessional basis of future church

At the January meeting, the churches officially decided to hold a convent in August 2003. There they will discuss the confessional basis of a future church, the model of unity that future church would have, its name and some of the legal requirements of a unification process.

To create more opportunities for progress, last year the DRC and URCSA moderators proposed three conditions under which all four churches could participate. They proposed that each church should declare in writing: 1) that they recognize the other three as Reformed churches, 2) that they recognize the offices and ordination of the other three, and 3) that they assure the others they are firmly committed to church unification.

The URCSA and the DRC have made such declarations. The DRCA has provided an answer, with qualifications. According to James Buys, moderator of the URCSA, his church will need more clarity from the DRCA. He hopes they will fully recognize the URCSA, and fully recognize their ministers. Buys said the URCSA believes these are necessary conditions for churches to begin discussion church unity. Buys hoped the DRCA synod, scheduled for May 2003, would settle these problems. *(Die Kerkbode)*

Christianity 'growing fast' in communist-ruled Laos, delegation told

Anto Akkara

BANGKOK, Thailand (ENI) — Christianity in communist-ruled Laos is growing "despite heavy odds," an ecumenical delegation visiting the Southeast Asian nation has been told.

"Once viewed as agents of the West" by the communist government, churches are now "growing fast," the executive president of the Lao Evangelical Church, the Rev. Khamphone Kouthapanya, told the ecumenical team from the World Council of Churches.

The delegation of WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser and the council's Asia secretary, Mathews George Chunakara, were in Laos at the end of February as part of a two-week visit to four Asian nations.

Growth amid restrictions

"This growth of believers has been happening since the mid-1990s without any assistance from overseas missionaries, and in the midst of lots of restrictions by local authorities of the Communist Party-led government," Kouthapanya told the group from the WCC, which is the world's largest church grouping.

One of the least developed nations in the world, Laos has been ruled by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party since 1975. Only two per cent of the five million people in the country are Christians, while 60 per cent are Buddhists and 30 per cent are animists.

Christianity was brought to Laos by Swiss missionaries in 1902. But church activities were banned after the communists seized power in 1975, and many Christians fled the country.

The membership of the Lao Evangelical Church, the country's biggest Protestant denomination, fell to 10,000 in the period following the beginning of communist rule.

The church says it now has a membership of about 100,000 people in 400 congregations, following the easing of restrictions on religious freedom in the 1990s.

Still, according to the 2002 Amnesty International annual report, members of small unauthorized Christian churches continue to be harassed and even arrested, despite official denials. The majority of reported incidents took place in villages in the provinces, Amnesty said.

The visit by Raiser was the first by a WCC general secretary to Laos, and he was met at Vientiane international airport by high-ranking state officials and leaders of the Evangelical church.

Raiser had meetings with senior government officials and leaders of the ruling party, as well as with the Supreme Patriarch of Lao Buddhism.

In his meeting with ruling party officials, Raiser spoke of the WCC's "long standing commitment" to the people of the countries of Indochina, including Laos, since the time of the Vietnam War.

Chunakara told ENI that the Lao government officials had briefed Raiser on policy changes in recent years especially on the economy and freedom of religion.

"The estranged relationship between the church and the state in the past has been restored and strengthened now," Raiser told a public meeting of church leaders, government officials and ruling party representatives.

"What we see now is a church that is thriving, striving and self-confident and a church that fully shares the aspirations of the country."

Canada's Anglicans and government agree on settling abuse claims

Ferdy Baglo

VANCOUVER (ENI) — The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) and the federal government signed an agreement in March to meet the multi-million dollar cost of settling abuse claims filed by former students of now-defunct residential schools for indigenous children.

Representatives of the church and the government met at the ACC office in Toronto to sign the agreement, which comes into force the same week, and will compensate former students who have proven claims of sexual or physical abuse.

Lawsuits claiming abuse had been filed against the government and four church denominations, including the Anglican Church, by 12,000 people.

The schools had been operated from 1820 to 1969 by the four denominations on behalf of the federal government. The Anglican Church ran 26 schools and was named in 2,200 lawsuits.

Under the agreement, the denomination will pay 30 per cent of the compensation costs for the cases involving the Anglican-run institutions up to a maximum of $25 million. The federal government will cover the remainder.

Huge compensation, litigation costs

Without an agreement, the Anglicans faced compensation and litigation costs of an estimated $60 million and possible bankruptcy.

In all, about 105,000 native children attended 80 schools operated by the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic orders, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and the United Church of Canada on behalf of the federal government.

Several school staff members in recent years have been jailed for their part in specific instances of abuse.

The United Church has made 78 individual settlements but has about 700 cases outstanding. The denomination had been waiting for the Anglican settlement to be finalized before engaging in further negotiations with the federal government.

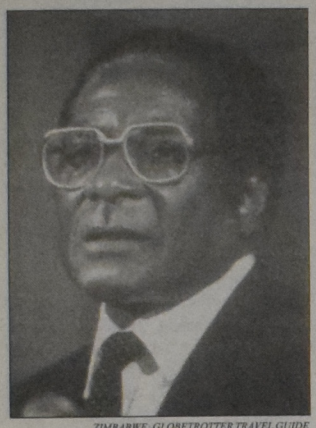
The Presbyterian Church operated only two schools but faced 16 lawsuits claiming abuse. The denomination has signed an agreement with the government that would see the church contribute $2.1 million to a settlement fund.

The vast majority of the residential schools — 75 per cent — were operated by various Roman Catholic religious orders, several of which have settled lawsuits in which they were named.

Some earlier estimates placed the total cost of settling the lawsuits — for the government and the denominations together — at $1 billion.

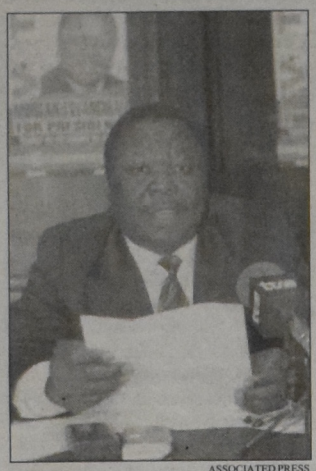
Church

Archbishop in hiding as Zimbabweans go on strike



ZIMBABWE: GLOBETROTTER TRAVEL GUIDE

Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Morgan Tsvangirai

Harry der Nederlanden

ZIMBABWE — Pius Ncube, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city, has gone into hiding, his life threatened by state security agents. He was warned to stop inserting political commentary in his sermons after a prayer meeting in which church leaders heard accounts of torture and other political violence. Ncube has been an outspoken critic of the policies of Zimbabwe's President Mugabe for several years.

Recently Methodist Bishop Trevor Manhaya was arrested by police who broke up a church meeting with riot sticks.

Peaceful demonstrators arrested

At the beginning of March, 23 clergymen engaged in a peaceful demonstration against police brutality were arrested, despite having obtained permission for their protest. The men were released after being subjected to intimidation and harassment.

In mid-March the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) called for a general strike to protest Mugabe's policies, and most factories and stores in the major cities were closed. Numerous arrests were made and the army called out as protests turned into riots in some areas.

Millions may starve

Inflation in Zimbabwe is running around 200 per cent and some seven million people are threatened with starvation.

A team of British filmmakers secretly recorded the results of Mugabe's policies last year. They showed that Mugabe was manipulating food shortages so that food distribution to parts of the country that support the opposition party were being diverted. The opposition is literally being starved out. Human rights organizations have also documented an average of one politically motivated murder per week in the country, a number that some critics say is ridiculously low.

Trial for treason

In February Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the MDC, was put on trial for treason. The government alleges he conspired to have Mugabe assassinated. There's a Canada connection. The main piece of evidence against him is a videotape made in Montreal by a former Israeli spy who claims Tsvangirai approached him with the plot against Mugabe. The videotape was shown on national television and showed signs of heavy editing, as shown by the timer on the tape.

'To test and approve'

Chapter & Verse
Al Wolters

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Rom 12:2, NIV)

This well-known passage stands at the head of the third major section of the book of Romans. The first section deals with an exposition of the gospel, specifically justification by faith, the middle part (chapters 9-11) deals with the place of the Jews in God's plan of salvation, and the third part outlines the practical consequences for the Christian life which flow from the foregoing teaching. So chapters 12-16 give very practical advice about how to live the Christian life: be hospitable, obey the political authorities, pay your taxes, bear with your weaker brothers and sisters, and so on. As a kind of heading over this third section stands Rom 12:1-2, including the words we have quoted.

What is remarkable about this passage is that the apostle does not simply enjoin his readers to pay careful attention to the practical exhortations which follow, so that they can live the Christian life simply by following the guidelines which he lays out. Although this is undoubtedly part of what he wants the recipients of the letter to understand, he goes beyond this to stress that they themselves must figure out what God's will is for the various situations in which they will find themselves. The explicit apostolic directives, as well as the ethical teaching of the Bible as a whole, do provide a comprehensive framework to which believers must orient themselves, but there are still a host of questions about God's will which the Scriptures do not explicitly address. Should I serve in the Roman army? Should I study pagan literature? Should I become a professional actor? These are the kinds of questions to which Christians must seek an answer through the renewing of their minds, which will allow them to discern God's will in a particular concrete situation.

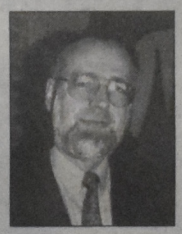
A double-edged verb

The key phrase here is "to test and approve what God's will is." Actually, the original corresponding to the translation "test and approve" is a single Greek verb (*dokimazein*) which can have both those meanings. It refers on the one hand to an action whereby a substance is tested in order to determine or assure its genuineness. It is used of testing a gold coin to make sure it is not counterfeit, or of melting gold in a crucible in order to purge it of impurities. Once that is done, however, the verb also refers, on the other hand, to the action of attesting that the substance in question is the real McCoy, of giving it the stamp of approval.

Both meanings important

Both of these meanings are important for understanding what the apostle is teaching us here. Finding out God's will is a matter of testing, of probing and investigating in order to find the real thing. It may involve a measure of experimentation and trial and error, like finding the right wavelength on a radio dial. It is also a communal rather than an exclusively individual activity (the imperatives here are in the plural). Mature Christians can help those who are young in the faith, believers with expertise in one area (art, for example, or economics) can help others to discern the divine will for a specific area, and revered teachers of the past can provide guidance for contemporary believers. The entire body of Christ is involved in the discernment of the will of God.

But it is also important to affirm the genuine article once it has been found. It is not enough to figure out what God's will is, it must also be validated by professing it and doing it. In fact, it is often in the doing of God's will that our knowledge of it is deepened and confirmed. In other words, what God wants in a particular situation must be both tested and attested, both sought out and existentially validated in the concreteness of our experience.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. He is currently on sabbatical, writing a commentary on Zechariah.

Plea for non-violence in Nigeria falls on deaf ears

NIGERIA — In anticipation of elections scheduled for April, Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria united to call everyone to embrace a spirit of tolerance. They especially appealed to militant Muslims to reject the way of violence and terrorism.

Religious violence a 'monster'

Catholic leaders were joined by Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, sultan of the city of Sokoto, who is regarded by many as the leader of the Muslim community in Nigeria. Anyim Pius Anyim, President of Nigeria's national parliament, called on Nigerian Muslims and Christians to soberly reflect on the religious conflicts that plague the country. He stressed that the only way out of the predicament was for both Muslims and Christians to confront the "monster" that religious violence had become.

But religious violence erupted once again in the central state of Plateau as Christians launched retaliatory attacks against three Muslim villages. Although 17 people were wounded, no one was killed in the attack, initiated by Christians who had been displaced from their homes by Muslim attacks a year earlier.

A Christian community in the state of Adamawa was not so fortunate when they were attacked by a well-armed Muslim mob. Over 100 people died, some 500 were injured and 21,000 people displaced. Many are still missing. In clashes in the same town in December of last year, 16 Muslims and two Christians were killed. The attack at the end of February was seen as retaliation for those deaths.

In the southwestern city of Ibadan schools were also targeted by militant Muslims. Three Christian schools were attacked by members of a Muslim youth organization that insisted female students be made to wear a veil. Hundreds of students and teachers were injured.

[With stories from Compass and ENI]

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News

Finding doorways into your church's community

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – "Would your community notice if your church disappeared?" was the question Hans Kater challenged workshop participants with at the Niagara Spiritual Growth Conference held March 1 at Covenant CRC in St. Catharines. Kater encouraged churches to look for "doorways into the community," and find ways to make their ministries relevant to the people around them.

ALAN DOERKSEN PHOTOS

Kater encouraged churches to look for "doorways into the community."

Church has dual role

"The church has a dual role – inside and outside," said Kater, who is the national director of Diaconal Ministries Canada, whose vision statement is: "Transforming communities in Christ!" Kater encouraged churches to get out of their comfort zones and get involved in community projects.

Congregations and their members should be involved in corporate and individual outreach, suggested Kater. "When I talk about community outreach by the church, I'm talking about the whole church."

Addressing the issue of why outreach should happen, Kater said, "God says we will be blessed by it." He pointed to the Beatitudes, which tell how God blesses those who are merciful and who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for instance.

Outreach examples

Kater asked participants to give examples of "open doors" into their communities. Participants mentioned the St. Catharines Out of the Cold program for homeless people; the Alpha course – which introduces non-Christians to the basics of Christianity; and the Resource Association For Teens (RAFT) – an interdenominational group which provides a safe, warm place for street kids. One participant's church holds a Coffee House once a month, which features music and film clips. Another outreach is a singing ministry which visits seniors homes in the area.

Kater mentioned other examples of outreach, such as North York's Friendship Community Church's soccer games, which provide a link to local youth, and the parish nursing program offered by Hamilton's Central Presbyterian Church.

One important thing about church-based outreach programs is that church members get directly, intentionally involved in the community, explained Kater. Churches also need to get to know their community, and "there has to be a committed, praying team" behind outreach work, Kater stressed.

Churches should also understand themselves and "what DNA your church has."

Kater's home church is First CRC in Hamilton, which has a high population of mentally ill people living in its neighborhood. Kater is part of a community small group which includes mentally ill people. "I am blessed beyond comparison through that group interaction," he testified. "I'm enriched by it."

Principles to follow

Kater offered a set of principles to follow when planning community outreach. Outreach should be:

- **Relational.** "People are more important than the program," said Kater. "People are desperate for community."
- **Holistic.** "It has to be the cup of water and the bread of life," asserted Kater.
- **Transformational.** "In Christian ministry, it's God's power. God transforms people's lives – we don't."
- **Image-bearing.**
- **Vocation.** "Work is sacred – God gives us work." Some Christian Reformed World Relief Committee projects offer job training, observed Kater.
- **Inclusive.**
- **Addressing justice.** "There are things that need to be spoken about that are wrong in our society," said Kater. "Silence is not permitted."

Diaconal Ministries offers more information about existing outreach programs on its web site, at: **www.diaconalministries.com/outreachministry**.

Kater challenged participants to consider the question: "What is God calling your church to do in your community?" In order to find out, "it takes a lot of soul-searching. Ask God for guidance and vision." He asked participants to raise the question "Would your community notice if your church disappeared?" with their own congregations.

Small groups can be a 'multiplying ministry'

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Small groups can be a very effective means of church growth and personal spiritual growth. But there are challenges and obstacles to be faced, and Michael Collins addressed these in a workshop on small groups which was part of this year's Niagara Spiritual Growth Conference held at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines March 1.

The conference was titled Remain in the Vine – appropriate for the grape-growing Niagara region – and was open to members and leaders from CRCs in the region.

Michael Collins, who led the small groups workshop, is discipleship co-ordinator at Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ont. His personal interest in small groups began about 20 years ago, when he was first invited to a small group as a non-Christian. Collins and his wife went to that group for four years and both became Christians.

Now Collins works with Mountainview – a large congregation. People can lose a sense of intimacy in a large church, says

Michael Collins

Collins, so "the church must always be growing larger and smaller at the same time." That is, small groups can bring back a sense of intimacy, and allow church members to build good connections with each other.

"Our groups are a multiplying ministry," he observes. At Mountainview, groups grow and then divide into new groups.

Fun to be a leader

"The most important thing about leading a small group is not the ability of the leader but the leader's trust in the ability of God," says Collins. A good leader will be "refreshed by the group.... It's fun to be a leader." He stresses that small group leaders are "not mini-pastors."

Leaders don't have to do everything, but can put others in charge of some aspects of the group.

When people say they are too busy for small groups, we can ask them, "What are you doing for yourself? How do you grow spiritually," suggests Collins.

To encourage growth of small groups, personal invitations are important. Collins mentions the Empty Chair concept, in which a small group will set out an empty chair to encourage group members to invite new people. Group members will pray, "God, bring someone to fill that empty chair." This can be one mission of the group.

Mission component important

"The mission component is very important in small groups," asserts Collins. Groups can reach out to "the lonely, forgotten, abandoned, lost, betrayed, unconnected."

Churches can meet some real needs such people have. "Non-Christians can't answer three questions: Where do I come from?; Why am I here?; Where will I go when I die?" says Collins.

Small groups can take also take on other mission projects. For instance, Mountainview CRC has a Healthy Habits group which does exercising and devotions. Another church has a walking group. Collins recommends that churches consider other ways to become involved in their local community, such as addressing marriage enrichment and parenting adolescents – two high-interest topics.

But Collins notes, "It's not appropriate for all small groups to be mission-minded." He gives the example of a "Turbo Group" at his church, which is a closed group for training small group leaders, who can each start a small group later on.

Collins uses the model of a three-legged stool to describe a small group, the "legs" being: Bible study, group building/fellowship, and a mission/task.

But one obstacle small groups can face is what Collins calls the "comfortable chair." This describes the situation of group members getting too comfortable within their group, with the attitude, "I've got my group for life.... There's all kinds of potential we're missing if we focus on ourselves."

Short-term groups good

Collins advocates having short-term groups instead. "The longest I've been in a group is four years," he says. By being part of several groups, "I'm so blessed to know so many people."

Ongoing prayer is very important to sustain small groups, asserts Collins. "There's no doubt in my mind that small groups fail in churches from lack of prayer."

Collins recommends some resources for small groups, such as the Serendipity Bible – which contains ready-made Bible studies, complete with a variety of questions for groups. Materials used in small groups should be doctrinally solid, he says.

Mountainview uses "starter kits" which contain Bibles with the title *Vox Dei* (the voice of God) on the cover, bookmarks and other

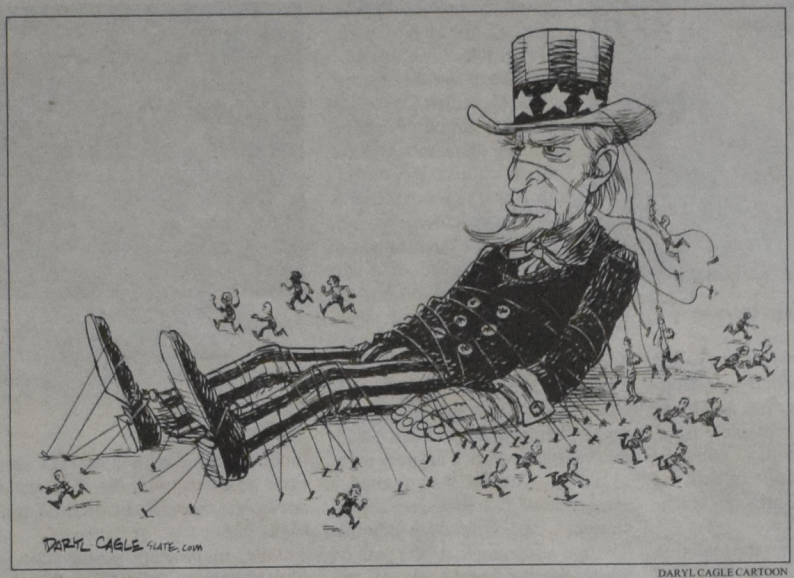
Continued on page 11...

News

Students at Christian colleges address issue of war

Elise Stolte

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – On February 20, Calvin College's Student Senate passed a resolution condemning unilateral U.S. action against Iraq and kicked off a round of vigorous debate on both the threatened war and the place of student representatives. A student wide referendum on March 13 saw that resolution overturned.



DARYL CAGLE CARTOON

Big voter turnout

In a school of 4,300 students, 1,450 students turned out to vote, a number exceeding figures for the Student Senate Executive Team and main Senate elections combined. Fifty-nine percent voted in favor of rescinding the resolution.

The resolution was originally proposed and supported by a coalition of student social justice groups. After holding a town-hall style debate and modifying the resolution to address some of the student concerns raised, the Senate passed a resolution by a margin of 13 to one, with three abstaining. The resolution urged U.S. President George W. Bush to pursue a peaceful solution to the conflict with Iraq through the United Nations. The Senate planned to send copies to Bush as well as Michigan's federal representatives.

Immediate, intense reaction

Student reaction to the resolution was immediate and intense. As Senate president, Betsy Cooper said before the referendum, "It's become a huge thing on campus. Everywhere I go I hear someone saying something."

The student message board set up on the topic received more than 1,000 messages in only two weeks.

Much of the reaction against the resolution came from another student group, the Calvin Republicans. They circulated a petition to ask Senate to rescind the resolution and obtained the necessary support of 10 per cent of the student body to convince the Senate to review the matter. As directed in the Senate Constitution, when the Senate did not voluntarily withdraw the resolution, it went to a student-wide vote with a majority rule.

Many students angered

Calvin's elected Student Senate normally focuses on issues more internal to the college. The resolution angered many students who either felt they are not being represented by the decision, or felt the Senate has overstepped its mandate as a representative body.

Student Tony Minnema was actively involved in promoting the anti-anti-war petition. Quoted in the *Calvin Chimes*, he said, "I believe that the Student Senate is taking sides based on personal feeling . . . . They are overstepping their bounds. They are misrepresenting this college."

Supporting Minnema's position, student Josh Crim said, "We're divided, and I just think that the Student Senate should be more concerned with issues on this campus. That's why we elected them, ... not to make political statements regarding national issues."

On the other side of the debate, Jamie Heerema voted in favor of the resolution. "As a Christian community, we should have a voice in what is going on, and we should take a stand," she said.

Student opinion split

Student opinion is split with vocal proponents for both sides. For Cooper, "the biggest problem is that people just get so passionate about their case they forget there is another person on the other side."

She sees passing the resolution as fully within the Senate mandate, part of which is to represent the community of Calvin to the outside world. A similar resolution was passed by the Student Senate in 1969 to oppose the war in Vietnam.

Cooper originally supported the resolution as a way to encourage student debate. Before the referendum, she said, "I hadn't heard much discussion on [the Iraqi conflict]. Too often I feel that students here become apathetic to issues outside their own community. Even if the resolution doesn't pass, at least we've thought about it."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the 49th parallel, student representatives for The King's University College have not taken an action on this issue and are not planning any for the future — although their place within the student body is similar to the Calvin Senate's.

"I think [the Senate's action] is completely out of line," said Matt Blimke, Vice-President External, adding that he thinks the proper place for such action lies with the student clubs. "The student government's role is to address issues that are of specific importance to students (like funding or cost of living). They should not be making statements representing students on political issues."

Priorities within school community

However, Dave Booy, president of the Students' Association, takes a different stand. "Our mandate doesn't exclude [such action]," he said, "but our priorities are within the school community." He explained that the group hadn't taken similar steps mainly because they had not thought of it and because other concerns more internal to King's had been taking up a lot of their time. "We would be open to it if that's what the student body wants," he added.

'Feed Thine Enemy'

Both Blimke and Booy felt that the anti-war protest held at King's through the student social justice club was sufficient. Part of a "Feed Thine Enemy" campaign, the protest saw 200 students (of roughly 600) send small bags of rice to Bush and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien along with a plea for peace.

Apart from the Senate resolution, student clubs at Calvin have also been active opposing the war. Social Justice groups have worked to inform students on key war issues and have joined national protests against the war in Washington, D.C.

Although the results of the referendum are seen as a set-back, protests will continue. As Jimmy Osborn, a student social justice leader, told the *Calvin Chimes*, "The result of the vote does nothing to discredit the position and beliefs of those who speak out against a war in Iraq. Whether or not the issues of Student Senate and this resolution is pursued any further, we will continue our efforts to discredit this war, to confront the unacceptable militarism of this government."

Small groups can be a 'multiplying ministry'

... continued from page 10

items. That church's small groups also keep copies of John Chapter 3 Bible studies, in case a non-Christian joins a group. This encourages small groups to invite non-Christians, Collins notes.

To encourage growth of small groups, Mountainview gives out little chairs to group leaders whose groups have filled the "empty chair." And group leaders pass on batons to apprentice leaders. "You just need to be creative," says Collins.

If a church is starting up small groups, Collins suggests, "First of all, [the] pastor needs to be on-stream." Mountainview's pastor promotes small groups from the pulpit, and writes letters to church members to encourage them to join groups. Collins recommends that church council members, elders and deacons be part of and help to lead small groups. Mountainview CRC holds four-week Bible studies from time to time, and takes away council members' responsibilities during those times, to free them up to be involved.

Congregations should move together toward a vision of having small groups, suggests Collins, to serve the church and the community.

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June **23**,24,*28*,**30**	919	879	759
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July **14**,15,*19*,**21**,22,*26*,**28**,29	979	939	779
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Opinion

Peace, peace, but there is no peace

Harry Antonides

The "war" on the American determination to bring about a regime change in Iraq rages on. This is a war of words plastered on countless placards and shouted by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in the major cities of the free world on a Saturday in mid-February.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Saddam Hussein: a Stalinist monster?

This massive outpouring of protests, fueled by a visceral hatred of America, is in many ways reminiscent of similar "peace" protests of the 1930s. Are we condemned to repeat the mistakes made then?

Very few today will disagree that Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's efforts to establish peace by negotiations with Hitler paved the way for a world-scale disaster that killed and maimed millions of people and caused incalculable physical destruction. How could such evil happen? But the real question is: Have we learned anything from that awful history?

The anti-war demonstrators and the word hagglers at the United Nations will hasten to say that there simply is no comparison. Saddam Hussein is no Hitler, and his army is nothing compared to the Nazi war machine.

Churches speak out

I want to focus on the role of the churches in the current anti-war campaign. After all, we might expect churches to give leadership when faced with vexing moral choices, such as we are now facing.

Most of the major church bodies that have publicly expressed an opinion have opposed the war against Iraq, reinforced with frequent references to the biblical injunctions about peace and peacemaking, and against violence and war. With such backing, one might think that the case is closed. But things are a bit more complex than that. Let's first review their major arguments by looking at a number of recent church pronouncements.

Of one thing we need not be in doubt. Church leaders are categorical in condemning the American determination to dismantle Saddam's regime by military force.

The World Council of Churches, a fellowship of 342 churches in more than 100 countries, issued a statement on October 15, 2002 in which it said that "many Christians strongly believe that pre-emptive war against Iraq is illegal, immoral and unwise."

It took aim at the U.S. and U.K. governments' call for military action against Iraq. It called on the international community to uphold the rule of law, to refuse participation in what it called "pre-emptive" military attacks against a sovereign state, and to reject war as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy, which it described as a violation of both the UN charter and Christian teachings.

The WCC said that the attention should be on addressing the "root causes" of this conflict and on ending the dire humanitarian crisis in Iraq and the entire Middle East. The thrust of this letter gives the impression that the main sources of the problem are the U.S. and the U.K. and not the current tyrant in Baghdad.

Its statement concluded with the text from Isaiah 2:4: "No nation shall lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Appeal for peacemaking

A host of other church leaders have echoed the warnings against the U.S. war plans. Last summer, 38 Christian leaders from Britain, Canada and the United States appealed to the American government to refrain from military action because they believe that alternatives to military action have not been exhausted. They warned that respect for law would be undermined by unilateral American action. Their urgent appeal concluded with Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called the children of God."

The National Council of Churches in the U.S., after a recent fact-finding trip to Iraq, declared: "As disciples of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we know this war is completely antithetical to his teachings."

On February 5 of this year — the same day Secretary of State Colin Powell made his dramatic presentation to the UN Security Council in defense of disarming Saddam Hussein by force — the WCC sponsored a meeting of European church leaders. While also calling on Iraq to comply with binding UN resolutions, its main message was to condemn the U.S. military plans. It urged the Security Council "to uphold the principles of the UN Charter which strictly limit the legitimate use of military force."

The Canadian Council of Churches urged President Bush in September 2002, "not to choose the terrible path of war to solve the challenges presented to the world by the government of Iraq." It argued that the people of Iraq who had already suffered much would again bear the brunt of the deadly impact of another war. And it warned that a pre-emptive war is a dangerous precedent-setting policy, insisting that there are "credible" alternatives to a military invasion. The Council then quoted a statement of the President's own church, the United Methodist Church, affirming that "the path on which the President seeks to embark is counter to the teaching of Jesus… and is one that threatens the rule of law as a fundamental principle of democracy."

This same church Council, in concert with the pacifist Project Ploughshares, had addressed the Prime Minister 10 days after the attack on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. The thrust of that message was that at all costs a military response to the September 11 atrocities must be avoided. And the Americans cannot be trusted to give the terrorists and their accomplices a fair trial. That's why this letter stated that if apprehended, the terrorists should be brought before an international tribunal.

The letter writers used this opportunity to stress the superiority of Canada's commitment to multilateralism over the American reliance on going it alone. They wrote that seeking to bring the criminals to justice is a policing not a military task. A single-minded military pursuit, according to the Council and Project Ploughshares, threatens to undermine our civil liberties and might lead to increased military spending at the expense of social programs.

In an Open Letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien on September 23, 2002, the Canadian Council of Churches urged him again to say No to war with Iraq. They assured him that "the peacemakers are called children of God. The world was created for peace, not war. That is an affirmation of faith. To live by it — to act politically on the truth of it – is fruitful beyond all calculation."

Questionable advice

You can read more of the same in other statements by church leaders on war, peace, and terrorism. I think that there are a number of serious problems with the churches' advice on these hotly debated issues.

GRETA HAM'S HOMEPAGE, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

The mythical Hydra. Antonides describes modern terrorists as "a Hydra-headed monster with many poisonous tentacles."

One. In positing peacemaking over against war the church spokespersons are silent about the very clear biblical teaching that governments are instituted for the good of citizens and the punishment of wrongdoers (See especially Romans 13).

Reckoning with reality of evil

Jesus announced a blessing on peacemakers, but he also said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matthew 10:34). Further, there is a long and significant history of Christian thought about war that reckons with the reality of evil and the need to oppose evil by force in certain circumstances. As the author of Proverbs says: there is a time for peace and a time for war (Eccl. 3: 8).

This does not mean that war can be undertaken lightly. A war to be just must meet a number of stringent conditions. It should be a last resort, there must be a recognized, lawful authority, non-combatants must be spared, and so on. One of the conditions is especially crucial: (re-)establishing peace and good order, and thus an environment of freedom and justice, especially the freedom of religion.

What complicates the arguments for war against Iraq is that the transgressor is not, like Nazi Germany, a single enemy nation. Rather, the enemy is driven by a single, hate-filled religious zeal but dispersed in more than 60 countries. It is a Hydra-headed monster with many poisonous tentacles. Nonetheless, this one secretive, violent organization is directed by one overriding goal: to inflict maximum damage on the West, of which the U.S. is the most visible and powerful representative – the Great Satan. What makes this war against the West all the more repulsive is the indiscriminate attack on children, women and the old.

This is an indisputable fact: war was declared on America in the dramatic and murderous attack of September 11, 2001. It seems eminently sensible to me that the country in the crosshairs of the terrorists has the right and duty to defend itself with the only effective countermeasure, military force. The problem is that terrorism of this kind cannot be defeated in one place and with one decisive battle. But that does not mean that the U.S. does not have the right to (counter) attack directly at least one part of the conspiracy. That's cutting off one particularly wicked, poisonous tentacle of the Hydra monster.

Depths of savagery

Two. What is becoming all too clear, at least to those who want to know the truth, is the depth of savagery that Saddam Hussein has unleashed on his own people. Again and again, one can now hear the testimony firsthand of victims of the rule of fear, terror and murder of this cruel regime. It has invaded every aspect of Iraqi society so that all true life and spontaneity has been wrung from the people's existence.

Let me quote a description of Julius Strauss, an experienced reporter who recently visited the Kurdistan part of northern Iraq. He had previously reported on many scenes of brutality in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Chechnya. But he writes that nothing prepared him for the "odious evil of Saddam Hussein's rule." Strauss continues:

"In the 1980s, while the West railed against Nicolae Ceausescu's plan to destroy 3,000 villages, Saddam Hussein actually did it. Then he murdered 180,000 Kurdish men above the age of 15 simply because he thought they might one day turn against him.… Nor has the killing stopped since. Thousands of Iraqis are still being executed without trial, and tens of thousands are routinely tortured. Millions live in a state of numb fear….. As the drums of war beat ever louder, I am still unsure of the strategic wisdom of opening a second front in the war against terror. But of the moral rectitude of such a course, there can be no doubt." (Julius Strauss, "Iraq's poisoned babies have made me a hawk." (*National Post*, February 28, 2003.)

Many Iraqis who speak from bitter personal experience, having

escaped from their country of birth, are supporting military action against the Saddam regime. Rania Kashi, an Iraqi university student now living in England, sent an e-mail to her friends explaining why she would not join any "peace" protests:

"You may feel that America is trying to blind you from seeing the truth about its real reasons for an invasion. I must argue that, in fact, it is you are still blind to the bigger truths in Iraq… "Saddam has murdered more than a million Iraqis over the past 30 years; are you willing to allow him to murder another million?"

A further compelling reason to select Iraq as a target for military invasion is the reality, confirmed again and again, that Saddam's regime is still in possession of large quantities of chemical and biological agents. And he is still pursuing the goal of acquiring nuclear arms. All the haggling at the UN and the so-called inspections on the ground have done nothing to eliminate the threat of Saddam Hussein in control of weapons of mass destruction.

DARYL CAGLE CARTOON

Love command applied differently

Three. In both Reformed and Roman Catholic thought much attention is paid to the distinctiveness of various kinds of authority. While the love command is universal, it must be applied differently in a variety of social settings. It is a serious mistake to ignore those differences. This is crucial in thinking about the rule of love in human relations.

As persons we are called to love and even forgive our enemies. We are called to turn the other cheek, and to walk the second mile. But the love command must be obeyed very differently, for example, by those entrusted with governmental authority, than by those within a church community, or a family.

In fact, the state has been endowed with the power of the sword, which means that in extreme cases, when there is no peaceful, civilized basis to relate to one another, a government may not only be allowed but be obligated to use force in order to protect and safeguard the good order and peace of its citizens. And if in the process of doing so it also succeeds in liberating another nation from a murderous dictatorship, would that not be a cause of great rejoicing?

It is not sufficient to quote the biblical injunctions to love our neighbor, even our enemies, and to be peacemakers, in support of an anti-war position. The truth is as Episcopal Bishop of Virginia, Peter Lee, stated in an address on January 31: "In a fallen world, we understand that one of the responsibilities of international leadership is to name the threats to peace and to participate in removing them, by diplomacy if necessary, by measured, necessary force as a last resort."

The biblical language of peace and forgiveness applies to each one of us in our relations to our neighbors. But to apply it similarly to governments is to abdicate our political responsibility. Can you imagine what would happen if governments would "turn the other cheek" to criminals and leave crime unpunished? Similarly, the United States, in response to a vicious attack and the repeated public threats of more to come, has the right to defend itself and to protect its citizens against attacks from the outside. Of course, if that can be done by an international force and with the support of the UN, so much the better.

Sometimes evil must be met with force

Is there anyone who would not agree that the defeat of Nazi Germany required that the free world (of which the United States then, too, was an important component) be prepared to fight at great cost? Similarly, there is good reason to think that the war against Iraq is necessary and justified.

No one can be sure about the outcome, and many things have to be considered by those in responsible positions. That's why Christians should be prepared to pray for the government of the United States and the soldiers, who will be putting their lives on the line, rather than to demonize them. Things can go terribly wrong, and the loss of life may be very high. If Saddam Hussein realizes that his cause is lost, he may try to unleash a campaign of massive destruction as a final act of utter contempt for his own people.

There is nothing straightforward and simple about any of this. Therefore, we may well honestly disagree about the strategic wisdom of going to war at this time. But to suggest that the dangers facing the U.S.— and all of us — are not grave and do not require honesty and a determined, forceful response is foolish and very dangerous.

There are two things that I find deeply ironic and disturbing in the current debate. One is the belief even in this country that the U.S. is a greater threat than Saddam Hussein. Anti-Americanism is ingrained in Canada, especially in the media, academy, and even government. Our Prime Minister has repeatedly let it be known that the Americans themselves carry a lot of blame for the September 11 attack. Recently two members of Parliament publicly expressed their disgust for the U.S., and one even said that President Bush delights in killing children. Talk about verbal violence and hate mongering!

Mushy, self-righteous sentimentality

The other is that many church leaders, while influenced by the same anti-American mindset, fail to tap into the best of our Christian heritage, that is, the biblical teachings about justice and the task of government. Their statements are filled with concern about the dangers of American unilateralism. Although most of them pay lip service to the need of eliminating Saddam Hussein, they seem to have no idea of the depth of suffering and evil imposed on the Iraqi people.

Their advice does not rise above the level of mushy, self-righteous sentimentality. They do not provide helpful advice in extremely complex and dangerous situations where leaders must make difficult political decisions. Rather they retreat to the moral high ground from which to lecture those who are responsible to make the hard decisions in a harsh and cruel world. Practical statecraft demands more than moralizing.

How else to explain the condescending tone of the churches' statements about the Americans? Further, how is it possible that the North American doyen of pacifism, Jim Wallis and his *Sojourners* magazine can advise the people of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein by the methods of non-violent, civil disobedience that have worked well elsewhere?

Anyone daring to give such advice to a people systematically brutalized and broken by a Stalinist monster is ignorant about the terrible reality. Such advice would be laughable, if it were not so pathetic – and immoral. That's the tragic reality of those who posture as moral purists, but in fact condemn a helpless people to a future of endless degradation and unspeakable grief.

Harry Antonides is a retired staff member of the Christian Labour Association of Canada. hantonides@sympatico.ca

Indispensable resources on the Arab world and Iraq

Harry Antonides

Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: the Politics of Modern Iraq*, 1989. This book was first published under the author's pseudonym, Samir Al-Khalil. Updated edition, University of California Press, 1998.

Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World*, New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.

This author, born in Iraq, now resides in the U.S. He writes brilliantly about Arab politics. While not uncritical of the West, he is unsparing of the Arab habit of blaming the West for its failures. This is not an intellectual exercise but a deeply moving and brutally honest detailing of the horrors unleashed on the Iraqi people and the entire Arab world. (Hence his use of a pseudonym for his first book.) Here are a few excerpts from *Cruelty and Silence*:

"The responsibility for that failure [to establish democratic forms of government and free institutions] can no longer be placed on the West or Israel, as Arab intellectuals are so fond of doing…. Men like Saddam Hussein, Hafiz Assad, King Fahd, and Yasser Arafat do not know how to behave differently. They are indigenous creations of modern Arab political culture…."

Totally irreconcilable

"I have, in effect, been arguing that the language of human rights and the language of Arab nationalism, or political Islam, have become totally irreconcilable….

"The problem is that neither nationalism nor political Islam in their current incarnations are intellectually equipped to bring about a fresh cultural start in the politics of the region. Their greatest failure, as I see it, is that they have failed to evolve a genuinely convincing language of rights and politics. Both have become fossilized, backward-looking and steeped in romanticism of 'struggle' which is conducive to violence. This language is today compacted against a wall of self-inflicted Arab suffering and pain…."

"Covering up for the Iraqi regime of cruelty during the Gulf crisis was not just a 'small mistake' of a misguided handful of people; it was a deep-rooted failure that must be acknowledged as such if we are to have a new beginning. If the cycles of violence, bloodshed, hopelessness, and despair are to be brought to an end, then Arabs must look inward – not outward to the West – and begin to realize that they are overwhelmingly responsible for the deplorable state of their world." (Cruelty and Silence, pp. 282, 283)

The Unites States was not obligated to come halfway across the world with 443,000 soldiers to sort out the problem of the Middle East. . . . But once the United States chose to shoulder that responsibility, and once the fighting began, then it acquired an obligation to the people of Iraq to end things differently, an obligation which it did not have before all those Americans were sent to fight in the Gulf….

"The Gulf crisis was never simply a matter of foreign manipulation or of the evil man playing the demagogue; it was at bottom an Arab moral failure of historic proportions, for which everyone who cares for the future of this part of the world must feel personally responsible. . . ." (pp.20, 22)

Why go to church? 17

To participate in the church year

A. A. van Ruler

The church calendar consists of a series of celebrations. Celebration is not something alien to the church. On the contrary, as the church, Christians especially love to celebrate. We celebrate the feast of salvation that has appeared in history, for by participating in it we are saved for time and eternity.

We cannot begin to say enough about this event; it is almost too wonderful to be true. We can only bring it home to ourselves by making a feast of it. Eternal salvation is more at home in the sphere of play than of high seriousness. When compared to the life of the big, intimidating world, the life of the church always appears somewhat unreal; it seems childish compared to the bitter struggles of daily life.

Reason for dancing

Isn't the fact that salvation has appeared in time something to spur us to dancing? Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Office Bearer who is bringing the work of God to completion here on earth. "It is finished!" he cried out at the end of his life on earth. The church is the fellowship that lives out of this completed work and that dies by it. It endows everything with a festive air.

This did not become clear – and real – until Jesus' resurrection. The Lord really has risen, and Peter saw him! Death has been overthrown and eternal life has broken into time. We may now live that very life. At heart, the feast of salvation that we Christians celebrate as church is the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. The church is the community of eternal life.

Easter is the seed

We celebrate the feast of the resurrection every Sunday. Every Sunday is a scaled-down version of our Easter celebrations. But quite early in its history the church felt the need to celebrate it separately as well once a year. The church quarreled noisily about the date. Once it was set, however, the other feast days quickly followed. Historically, Easter is the seed from which the entire church calendar sprouted.

You won't find a trace of the church year in the New Testament unless we grant significance to the fact that Jewish Christians continued to celebrate the Jewish festivals and that the events of salvation history are closely related (by God himself) to the events celebrated in the Jewish calendar. It is difficult, however, to find a biblical basis for the church calendar. It is a product of tradition rather than Scripture.

This is true of many things in the life of the church: our confessions, our hymns, liturgy, church order and Christian lifestyle. Scriptures are "sufficient" only for the good news. For the rest we also need tradition.

Salvation historical reality

When we inquire into the meaning of the church year, we come upon a number of important facts.

The first is that salvation is a historical reality. It appeared in history, and we need to be reminded of this fact. As Christians we do not, like the heathen, grope around without direction in a dark and unfathomable world. Nor do we, like the Jews, laboriously wend our way through the desert of time toward a messianic future. We are anchored in history. The real event by which we have been saved for time and eternity happened in the past in Palestine. And we must continue to orient ourselves to that past event and celebrate it.

Secondly, salvation doesn't come through a single fact in history but through one person – Jesus Christ. It is to him we keep turning in our Christian existence.

On the other hand, we don't just point to Jesus Christ, God the Son, the second person of the Trinity for our salvation. We also point to the Holy Spirit, who was poured out on all flesh. Our attention as Christians is not focused on the centre of a circle but on the twin centres of an ellipse, namely, the incarnate Word and the indwelling Spirit.

However, let's proceed from the position that salvation comes to us in one person, then we must still remind ourselves that he did many different things. To put it briefly, he was born, surrendered himself to death, arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. These taken together, of course, constitute a single work, but we must remember and celebrate it in its component parts. So it's not enough for us to celebrate a single feast. We need a whole series of feasts. This series is the church year.

We must add, in the third place, that the work of Christ in all its diversity must be presented to us as a unity in the preaching of the Word, and this is the proclamation of the Easter message. This is also the work of the Spirit. He applies the work of Christ to our hearts.

Still, in our appropriation of that work, we proceed step by step. It is asking too much to absorb it all in one moment. A person is apt to choke when he tries to take all that in.

A matter of the people

The church year, it seems to me, is not first of all a matter of the apostolic preaching of the gospel, and thus a matter of the church on its institutional side, but rather a matter of the people, individually and as a congregation. The church year is part of our appropriation of the gospel as ordinary believers.

Some argue that we shouldn't focus on the pietistic "ordo salutis" [order of salvation as it happens in the human heart] but that we should focus on the church calendar of the high-church tradition as the true experience of salvation. I would turn this around. The point is the appropriation of salvation by the individual, but the celebration of the church year is an excellent means to this end.

The church calendar keeps reminding the individual of the different moments of salvation throughout the year. Every holiday is an electric shock that starts our hearts to beating once again. Moreover, by being divided over different holidays, the work of the Mediator acquires a broader scope and clearer contours. It brings home to us that our eternal salvation has been accomplished for us in history. We don't just have one but a number of supports to lean on. The church calendar is an easier way to bring salvation close.

Let me point to a fourth perspective. The object is the appropriation of salvation, but not just individually, also communally. We are part of a community simply by virtue of being human. We are members of a community, perhaps essentially so.

One of the characteristic works of the Holy Spirit is the creation of community. He brings the whole back together. Our fellowship was broken by sin. Thereafter, each person seeks refuge in his own corner of the garden, like Adam and Eve in Paradise. But the Spirit heals these wounds and restores the individual to the number of those who are saved. He creates community. And people live in community, so much so that their whole desire is to be taken up into that community and to remain in it. The Spirit establishes the church.

Communal expression

This means that everything we are and do we are and do as part of the community. This includes the appropriation and celebration of salvation. These are done not just individually but also communally. And this brings us to the church year.

COSTA MANOS, MAGNUM

Greek Orthodox children tap red-dyed Easter eggs together. One child says, "Christ is risen," and the other repies, "Truly, he is risen."

What we have received as a unity and totality and keep receiving, namely eternal salvation in Christ, we must bring to communal expression. This always implies making it visible, external, for all community comes by means of the body. We never make contact with one another purely as souls. At the very least, there is always an exchange of glances or of letters.

A pliable form must come into being in which the church of Christ can as a community bring to expression her participation in and with his salvation. What better way than by laying it out in its historical components? This gives us the different feast days of the church year.

Our Reformed forefathers hesitated to adopt the church year, if they didn't outright reject it. But the people would not be denied. Did they go against their theological leaders only for the sake of the festivities and the days off? Or did their resistance arise from a Christian instinct? I'm inclined toward the latter.

Church holidays tainted?

What are we doing when we defend the church year on the basis of community? Aren't we tainting the case? Is it then still purely religious, purely a matter of faith, purely Christian?

To suppose that the latter is possible is childish. Once the church year is in the hands of the community, all sorts of things become associated with it. The church holidays also become popular holidays. They become wrapped in folklore. They are gilded with commercialism. The bigger they become, the more hoopla.

There's a danger that the whole thing gets out of control, of course, but on the other hand we must not be fanatical about purifying all popular elements from the celebration of the events of salvation history. As I see it, we must simply accept all sorts of mixing of churchly and popular folk elements, even of biblical and pagan things (Christmas trees, Easter eggs).

It is true that all these elements have to some extent hollowed out the main Christian holidays. This is painful and frustrating; yet, there is also something in it of the Christianizing of our culture.

I see no alternative to these partially secularized Christian holidays. It is up to the church to infuse the original meaning back into them.

It is the worship service of the church that must restore this meaning to the holidays of the church calendar. It must foreground these facts of salvation history as historical events and stress their meaning in the redemption of life.

The worship of the church then goes up and down with the rhythms of the church year. That is first of all a matter of atmosphere and tone. Each season of the church calendar has its own unique tone that has become established over the centuries. It is good to yield ourselves to them and participate in them.

This comes to expression in the selection of the songs we sing, in the passages we read from Scripture, in the prayers we say. The church seasons can also be brought to the fore in the colors and vestments used in church. Although the church year, as I see it, is more of a popular matter than an official one, the preacher can't help but take these feast days into account in his preaching. History has given us three different lectionaries – the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Lutheran – which not only designate the holidays of the church calendar but also prescribe the parts of Scripture to be read every Sunday.

[In North America several mainline denominations use the

same lectionary. It follows a three-year cycle of readings.]

No Reformed lectionary

The Reformed tradition did not follow that tradition, for good reasons. On a given Sunday of each year the same passages are read in the same combination. Why these passages (one from each of the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Psalms) were selected to be read together is often not clear. When the minister preaches on these passages, he is often tempted to pick a little here and a little there and to make arbitrary connections, instead of concentrating on a single part of Scripture to let that speak to us prophetically and apostolically. When Scripture is used in this way, it becomes too embedded in the life of the church; it is better for the spiritual well-being of the congregation if the Word of God stands over against the church. Last of all, it does not allow important parts of Scripture to speak to us.

Another alternative is for a preacher to create a lectionary for himself in which he works his way week after week through books of the Bible, preaching from different parts in different seasons of the church year, passage by passage or verse by verse. Some preachers select a different Scripture passage to preach from every Sunday. Finding an appropriate passage, however, can be very time consuming. Moreover, there's a good chance that such a preacher will keep returning to favorite themes and ideas, losing sight of the full content of Scripture.

Whatever the approach, the celebration of the church year should not depend on the particulars of the minister's preaching. This puts too much on the shoulders of the preacher. If people come to church on special holidays expecting a very special sermon, they will often come away disappointed. The celebratory dimension should not be sought solely in the content or the tone of the sermon.

Our Reformed forefathers did not really want a church calendar. Since the pressure from the people was too great, however, they adapted their sermon content to special days. I'm tempted to say, let's turn that around; let's give priority to the special holidays, for these belong to the fellowship of believers and to all the people.

But then everything depends on our going to church to celebrate the true meaning of the holiday. The church year gives us a good reason why we should go to church faithfully and regularly. This is the only way we can fully experience the rhythms of the church year. But then we must go every Sunday, not just on special feast days. Then every Sunday will be a little different, each adding another detail to the big picture of salvation.

During the Middle Ages more and more special observances were added to the church calendar – for Mary, for the evangelists, for the apostles, for certain martyrs, for church fathers, and so on. This became a burden on the economy. There were too many holidays when work came to a halt. This fact played a considerable role on the Reformation's assessment of the church calendar. But special holidays could be limited to Sundays so that each and every Sunday gets a special meaning in the celebration of the history of salvation. However, then there would be no "ordinary" Sundays, when each of us could focus on the whole gospel and on its meaning for me and my temporal existence.

A broken church year

We Reformed Christians have, thus, ended up with a broken church year: Advent and Christmas, and then the period of Lent leading to Easter and then Pentecost. So we have one part of the year oriented around feast days and another part without them. Is that good? Although it may not bother us personally, it isolates us from other churches. Most other denominations participate in the church year more intensely than we do. For ecumenical reasons, we do well to give up our sobriety in these matters and work on recovering our liturgical sense.

At the same time, we must be careful here. Is the church year as it has been handed down to us by tradition perhaps too exclusively oriented to salvation in Christ? Shouldn't we also be reminded of the Kingdom of God, which though rooted in the work of Christ nevertheless encompasses much more; namely, created reality in its redeemed and liberated state?

A full church year would not be limited to the events of salvation history but would also include the first and last things – creation and consummation. There would, for example, be a feast day on which we celebrate the fact that the world is and that we are here, too – purely a celebration of creation. A Christendom that does not have room for such a feast is too narrow-minded.

In this respect our current church year is lacking. I am therefore thankful for certain other holidays that have arisen on the margins of the church calendar, such as Thanksgiving, Labor Day, Old and New Year's Day and other national holidays. Perhaps we should construe the church year in such a way that these get a legitimate place in our calendar.

A fundamental question

Here we are engaging a fundamental question: what is the relationship between ordinary life and church life? Must our ordinary, earthly, temporal existence be melted down and refashioned into sacral, liturgical, churchly forms? Must we be lifted up out of the order of nature into the higher order of grace? Must we be transported from common time into a different, theological, mythical time? To put it simply, shouldn't we celebrate the day we were baptized as our birthday?

Or is it the case that the ordinary is the real heart of the matter, with the church merely dotting the i's and crossing the t's? I'm inclined to this way of thinking. The church year should not be allowed to dominate all of life, not just for economic reasons but for principial, spiritual reasons. The church year serves to illuminate our earthly existence to show its origin and end in Christ, but beside it there must also be plenty of room for civic and academic and other celebrations.

Sunday introduces a blessed rhythm into time, and this finds its place in the rhythm of the church year. The periods of the latter are longer than those of the first, but more importantly they are cyclical. It is closed: it ends where it began. The same keeps returning.

One might object that our experience of time is different. We don't experience time as a circle but as linear movement.

To this we can reply that this also has advantages, for it points to the unity of salvation and of all being.

We can also go a step further and ask, 'Must we always experience time as a straight line? Do we live only in history? Or do we also live in nature? Aren't we, in fact, part of nature?'

The cycles of the church year, thus, also embed us in nature and in the cycles of the seasons. Look at our celebration of the major feast days. For those of us who live in the north, Christmas is closely bound up with winter and Easter with spring.

I'm tempted to say that in this way the history of salvation celebrated in the church year becomes part of our biorhythms, of the ebb and flow of our heart's blood. Deeper than this we cannot go, for this touches the source of our very lives. In this way, the cycles of the church year fully imbue salvation into our daily bodily lives.

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Toni the Traitor

My wife and I live in a student housing complex. Our living room window looks out over a courtyard surrounded by 20 other apartments. We've placed a small 5x7-inch Canadian flag in the window — not a political statement, just a friendly "Hi, we're from Canada" sort of deal. I looked at the flag yesterday. It's curling up at the edges. A few dead flies cling to the front. It's dusty. I shrugged and let it be.

This wouldn't quite wash if it were the Stars and Stripes. Americans cherish their flag and go to great lengths to honor it. I admire that in many ways. Respecting the ideas of freedom and liberty. That kind of thing. This is why the Toni Smith thing is such a big deal down here.

Protesting government inconsistencies

Toni Smith plays basketball for the Manhattanville College women's team in a suburb of New York City. She's drawn nationwide publicity by deciding to turn slightly away from the flag and lower her head during the playing of the national anthem. It's her way of protesting the inconsistencies she sees in her country's government and the possible invasion of Iraq.

Smith is now widely despised as a traitor. When her team played at another college recently, the stands were full of fans waving flags and heckling her. Students at one college raised money to buy flags for everyone in the crowd to wave when Manhattanville came to play. A few weeks ago, a Vietnam vet ran out onto the court and waved a flag in front of Smith's face during a break in the play. To many, Toni Smith is a disgrace to her country.

Sports events are patriotic events

I certainly understand how important the flag is. But there is a larger question here: Is a sporting event the right venue for sending a political message? If Smith had chosen another school activity to make a statement, she wouldn't have made the national news. Sports has been chosen as a site for singing the anthem. A sports event (especially here in the U.S.) is a patriotic event.

During World War II, when many people were saying that the game of baseball should be canceled for the duration of the war, President Roosevelt intervened and said that the show must go on. It did continue, along with the introduction of the national anthem at the start of the game, and a tradition was born. With that tradition and the deeply symbolic context of the national anthem in mind, what right does a cheeky 21-year-old basketball player have to make a political statement in the middle of it?

Too few Christians take path of most resistance

As Christians, too few of us take the path of most resistance and publicly make stands against what we see as unjust or immoral. Smith has a quote in her biography on the team's web site: "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything." If I have a daughter, I hope she has the same willingness to stand up for her convictions.

There are few rules about how we're supposed to express our opposition to ideas, as long as it's done peacefully and legally. Getting past the "Oh, you're just another foreigner criticizing the U.S. while you sleep under the blanket of the freedom it provides" nonsense, I appreciate that a cloth flag symbolizes sacrifice and hard-fought freedom for many people. We should be able, though, to make personal statements of criticism without being accused of turning our backs on our country.

A bumper sticker I saw the other day said, "Love your country. Question its leaders." I hope that's still possible.

Tim Antonides in a teacher and sports coach currently studying in Chicago, Illinois.

Letter-writing ministry

Wally Goossen

A letter writing ministry can be adapted to many methods. It can be done by individuals working alone or by a group working together or by a combination of these.

To start, make an enthusiastic presentation of this ministry to the congregation highlighting the exciting aspects of letter writing and that it is effective. Such letter writing is not just to get something off your chest, they are read and help shape people's minds.

After sharing this ministry idea one week, it should be briefly mentioned the next week. Let people think about it. The week after that, there could be a meeting of interested parties and the co-ordinator for this ministry.

Some pointers like this article should be handed out to letter writers, some ideas might be tossed about, and they can then start writing. After two to four weeks a longer meeting could be held to discuss various aspects of letter writing and to discuss the options of working alone, working as a group, or a combination (likely the best option).

Meetings need not be frequent, perhaps once every two months. This should remain a simple outreach, not an institutionalized burden.

Perhaps sometimes letter writers might share letter ministry experience with the church Sunday morning.

Letters to editors

There are basically two types of letters that are accepted by the Letters to the Editor section. 1) Individuals can choose items from the newspaper on which to write or simply write about their own item of concern, 2) or they may react to another letter writer.

Some items may come up which the group will want to address as individuals, showing there are a number of people who feel the same way — perhaps about abortion legislation. They should not add the name of the church to their signature.

It is advisable for individuals not to take on too many issues, concerns, etc., at the beginning.

Leave church out

If the letter writers want to have an occasional (or monthly) meeting to compare experiences, they can do so. At such meetings an individual can bring attention to items of significance so that others can also focus on that item in writing. But usually these should be individual choices. Occasionally a "flooding" campaign may be useful, but again sign letters individually and leave the church out of it.

This prevents the church for being held responsible if an error is made in a letter (which will happen). An accidental "racist" comment, for example, can be more of a problem for a congregation than for an individual.

When a church is perceived to be behind the opinions expressed, it will be taken more seriously at times, but not everyone in your church may share your opinion.

In signing the letters to the editor do not give your home address or phone number. If someone calls the newspaper wanting to get in touch with you (if your number isn't listed) the paper will call you and ask if you want to talk to that reader. If you do, ask the paper to get his/her phone number and you call them. The paper may mention that the caller was angry or especially interested. It is best to ignore angry confrontations and arguments.

Little time or expense

Sometimes arguments will happen in the newspaper itself, but avoid a debate here too, because they usually are nonsensical "fights." Although, sometimes a follow-up letter may be valid to clear up a misunderstanding.

A letter writing witness is cheap (stamp, envelope, paper); it requires little time (one hour a week or a month), no traveling time to church, and can reach any part of the world as well as any home in your community. It requires no special training and it can be done flat on your back. Perhaps it should be called The Lazy Love ministry.

At the beginning it might help to specifically ask for 10 or more volunteers, but invite everyone who wants to take part. As time passes and the writing ministry becomes better known at church, and letters and anecdotes are shared, more people will become interested.

Probably, a co-ordinator would be useful at the beginning, but ultimately this witness should get a life of its own and not impose itself on the church's time, finances or busy people. Theoretically it is one of few approaches which can include everyone in the church.

Os Guinness explores roles of 'fool-bearers' and 'fool-makers'

Amanda Phifer

SAN FRANCISCO (BP) — "If we intend to change our culture, we must become, like Christ, fool-bearers and fool-makers in our world," Os Guinness, vice chairman and senior fellow of The Trinity Forum, told students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

"To the people of his day, Jesus was the ultimate fool-bearer," who bore "the shame and the guilt and the ridicule of the cross. We must be willing to be fool-bearers like Christ," said Guinness, a leading Christian apologist.

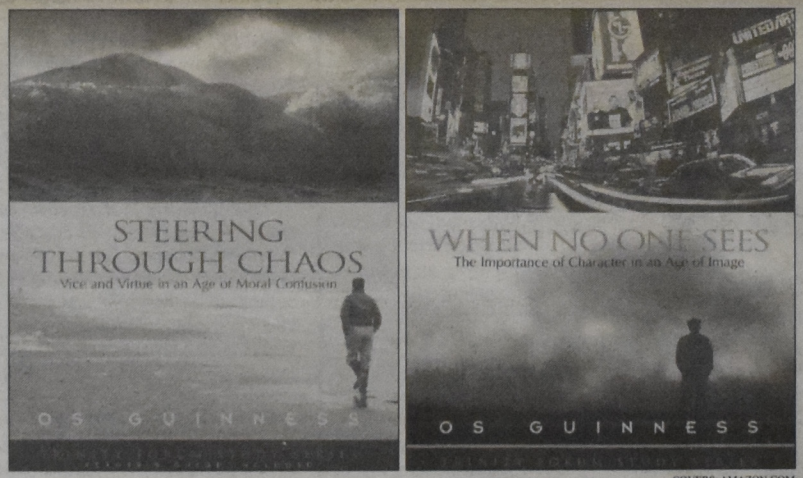
But Jesus also was a fool-maker, employing the perfect means of persuasion to help his hearers understand the "foolishness" of God's wisdom, Guinness said.

"In a crazy world, God's wisdom has to subvert [in] that way," he said. "Jesus helped people see the true folly of their thinking, and he often did it in the same way that a court jester makes his points, or in the way that the great humanist Erasmus did in his 'Praise of Folly.'"

Three kinds of fools

The Bible cited three kinds of fools, Guinness said.

"First, there is the fool proper — the person who, despite all the relativity of folly and heroism in the world, is truly a fool because God says so," Guinness said, adding, "We should never be this type of fool."


STEERING THROUGH CHAOS
Vice and Virtue in an Age of Moral Confusion
OS GUINNESS
WHEN NO ONE SEES
The Importance of Character in an Age of Image
OS GUINNESS

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Two recent books by Os Guinness.

Second is the fool-bearer, Guinness said. "The prophets were often ridiculed as fools. Paul was a fool-bearer for the sake of the gospel. And Jesus was of course the ultimate example of one who became a 'fool,' at least in the eyes of the world.

"The third kind of fool we find in Scripture is the one who is a fool-maker. When Nathan confronted David with his sins of adultery and murder, he showed David to have been a fool. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal showed them to be fools. Jesus' resurrection from the dead showed the establishment to be fools.

"My friends, we need to be that kind of fool-bearer and fool-maker in our world if we want to see our culture transformed," Guinness said.

Lack of persuasive power

The great challenge facing the Western church today, he said, is its lack of persuasive power. The Western church (the church in Europe and America) is adept at contextualizing, justifying and converting various people to the gospel, but it is sorely deficient at persuasion, he said, exhorting the students and faculty to take their cues from Jesus when it came to persuasion.

"Jesus was, of course, the best communicator," he said. "He made his communication relative to his audience. Jesus never spoke the same way to two people. When his listener was open, Jesus was simple and straightforward, because he knew that they would receive such statements. When his audience was doubtful, Jesus asked questions. Questions have two advantages over statements: they are indirect, and they get the hearer involved.

"Jesus also used reversals, such as the Beatitudes. We need to do the same. People find out you are a Christian and they immediately put you in a box. Your subversive tactic is to blow out of that box. Americans have heard the cliches enough."

Guinness explained two other forms of persuasion biblical characters used: parables, which add the element of imagination, and dramatic ploy, such as Elijah's calling down of fire upon the altar. The use of such persuasive and sometimes subversive tactics, he said, is not manipulation, but simply helping people see the truth for themselves.

Jesus persuaded them

"When Jesus referred to the hypocrites who prayed loudly on the street corners 'in order to be seen by men,' he didn't expressly accuse the Pharisees standing at the back of the crowd," Guinness said. "But the Pharisees knew exactly who he was talking about — they saw the truth for themselves because Jesus persuaded them to see it, not because he manipulated them into seeing it."

Guinness asked the students and faculty, "Are we prepared to be fool-makers for our Lord to reach our world for him?"

Guinness is the author of *The American Hour, The Call, Time for Truth* and *Long Journey Home.* His work with the Washington-area Trinity Forum is focused on bridging the gap between academic knowledge and popular knowledge, particularly in matters of public policy.

"Change in modern society is brought about by gatekeepers," Guinness said. "There was an anti-slavery movement in Britain before Wilberforce, but it wasn't truly effective until Wilberforce put his own political and cultural power behind it. Gatekeepers effect change. I would challenge you to choose 10 gatekeepers or leaders you will pray for regularly, because they are impacting your culture."

Opinion

Write that letter

Ty Hofman

Some time ago I was handed a sheaf of family letters from Cobi's side of the family, all written in the 1920s and in Dutch, from Friesland. Since most of the family can no longer read the Dutch, I was asked if I would please translate them for posterity. I was willing and I did.

It was an interesting project. And not easy. The letters were written in the typical Dutch style, and some of the writers hadn't majored in penmanship. A few were slightly damaged where they were folded. Some of the words were somewhat unfamiliar to me but with an old Dutch-English dictionary I could handle that. It was largely a matter of being able to identify the letters in each word.

What was noteworthy is the fact that these Frisians were all writing in Dutch — hardly a single Frisian word. Strange, because when speaking to each other they used nary a Dutch word. They were all of that generation that spoke Frisian at home and were allowed to speak only Dutch in school and heard only Dutch in church.

FRAZIER PHOTO LIBRARY

Now there are many impediments to getting out a good letter. One of them is that writing is fast becoming a lost art.

A treasure trove of insight

Those letters were a treasure trove of insight into the life of that extended family of 14 siblings, many of them living in California and several still in the old homeland. They contained all the family news over a period of several years, much of it about pending emigration and resettlement plans. The writers revealed the joy and the sorrow of life, including family problems and some tragedy. The husband of one of the sisters died in Indonesia, and the nigh penniless widow with several young children came back to Friesland to eke out a bare living. It was all recorded in the context of the pain and sorrow of a difficult time. Nearly four-score years later, we could live into the struggle of the stricken mother and her children. And so will all those who have these letters, now easily copied and sent out to each family in the relation.

Thinking about this historic treasure led me to ask if anyone could put together a set of comparable letters in my family. I concluded it would be hard to do. Many letter were likely written over the years but I suspect that very few of them were kept so faithfully. It just happened that someone in Cobi's family did a fine job of collecting and saving them. Perhaps we ought to scour our "archives" to find what we've written each other through the years. What a blessing that would be to our descendants 50 years from now. They'd discover something of who we were, and they wouldn't need a translator.

Why bother with snail-mail?

While I believe this might still be doable for us, reaching back maybe 40 or 50 years, I doubt very much whether in our times it will be possible at all. Today, not only do we not save our letters but we no longer write them. Who has time to sit down and write when you can pick up a phone and talk for 20 minutes for $1.00? And should we wish to send something more tangible than words over cell-phone connections, most of us will resort to e-mail. Doesn't cost anything, and postage is getting to be outlandishly expensive. And it is fast. Whether across town or across the Atlantic, it all goes in a few seconds. Why would anyone bother sending "snail mail?"

And if some one should, 50 years from now, decide to collect family e-mail letters he would have a tough time, for most of them will be locked up in obsolete and discarded computer hard-drives. And if someone should be saving hard copy of all their e-mail, such letters would reflect a boring sameness of black on white print, with none of the individuality of Mom or Dad's writing, revealing something of who they were by the way they inscribed their messages. While some people may still be sending letters using proper spelling and grammar, most e-mail today is completely undisciplined and unedited, without capitalization or correction of errors. Anyone reading it in 50 years would surely come to some strange and erroneous conclusions about what kind of persons had authored such letters.

Conscious steps needed

All of this suggests that there will be little of such tangible connections between the generations unless we take some conscious steps to reorder our communications. Maybe it is impossible to divert the stream of our habitual ways, even a trickle, but we ought to try it. So I say: Write a letter and send it by mail! It will be a fine surprise to Mom and Dad, or Grandpa and Grandma, or your siblings. Don't go to the phone. Don't rush to you computer. Get out your pen and paper and bless them with your news and good wishes in blue and white. If you must use a machine to order your thoughts, okay, but it will be second best to getting something in your own hand.

Writing becoming lost art

Now there are many impediments to getting out a good letter. One of them is that writing is fast becoming a lost art. For many people it is nigh impossible to put out a legible thought on paper. They didn't major in writing in grade school and, it seems, many products of the educational system today have never been taught cursive writing. They can only print, and for some it would be an exaggeration to call it that. I am an instructor for Crossroad Bible Institute which sends Bible lessons to prisoners who return them for grading by over 2,000 instructors. I have kept close track of the weekly lessons I have received over the past four or more years and practically all of the students are printers. Very few write their answers. Whether this is indicative of the type of people who end up in prison or that it holds for the general population I have no way of knowing. And what a challenge to decipher some of that "writing."

Which leads me to a somewhat tangentially-related reality. I have noted that most children attending grade schools today are not being taught how properly to hold a pencil. Even in Christian schools with high tuition, the students are allowed to invent their own way of holding this instrument. Quite clearly, some of such students could never achieve a cursive style of writing. I have observed this in going to Grandparents Day at schools for eight of our little darlings in the past 15 years. Could it be that some great psychologist has determined that "forcing" children to hold their pencils a certain way will cause some kind of complex? For even my speaking to a principal about the problem only drew forth a condescending smile. But I have sneaked in my private instructions to each one of my descendants with the hope they will be equipped to write a letter.

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The injustice of food insecurity

... continued from page 7

vulnerable to disasters because they are often forced onto marginal land and have no resources to fall back on. Of the natural disasters, drought is the prime cause of hunger — 25 million people are currently at risk in Africa due to severe drought.

- **Secure access to land:** Poverty and hunger are concentrated among the landless, or farmers whose plots are too small to provide for the needs of their families. Again, the poor are usually left with inadequate, marginal land, and/or do not have secure land tenure.
- **Lack of investment in agriculture:** Countries where hunger and poverty are widespread invest significantly less in agriculture than countries with less hunger. The rural poor are not a priority, and have no voice in their government.
- **HIV/AIDS:** This pandemic has brought about a significant reduction in family income and agricultural productivity, especially in Africa, as young people and parents die prematurely, leaving millions of orphaned children (1.2 million in Kenya alone). The poor are the most vulnerable, because of lack of access to information, health care, and affordable medicines.
- **International agricultural trade policies:** International trade patterns are more of a problem than a solution for poor farmers and countries. The World Trade Organization's trade rules oblige developing countries to open their markets to food imports from developed countries, thereby undercutting the markets for local farmers. While imposing rapid agricultural liberalization on poor countries, the WTO rules allow Europe and the U.S. to do the opposite at home. Developing countries often cannot export their crops and produce to developed countries. In addition, huge agricultural subsidies in Europe and the U.S. have driven global commodity prices down, which depresses investment in, and demand for, local production in the countries that most need it. We win, they lose.

Realize their potential

It's not enough to feed those who suffer from a lack of food. It's not enough to help poor communities survive an unjust world order by improving their coping skills and teaching them not to depend on their own land and their own country's natural resources. They should be allowed to realize their potential, and that of their country, fully — with dignity.

What would Jesus do? He would offer a cup of cold water, a meal, encouragement and love — but he would also overturn the tables in the temple of his world. Please support CRWRC as we struggle to provide for those who are in urgent need, bring hope and dignity to the poor, and advocate for global justice that will bring true, lasting change.

Wayne deJong is the director of the Canadian branch of the CRWRC.

News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

GUESS WHAT? THIS IS MY last column. I can plead old age, or spending more time with my family or making increased efforts to get my book, *A Hereafter Tale*, a Bible-fiction book, published. I have been told that writing a book is easy, getting a publisher is hard, and since I refuse to go the self-publishing way, I will use all my marketing skills to accomplish this.

But that, too, is not the reason. After all, writing my CC column is a cinch: I simply combine two columns I have written for the Belleville *Intelligencer* and pronto, there goes my "NOSE" column. I will continue to write my piece in the secular press. So, what then is the reason?

Bush and the U.S.A. policies, something that has dominated the news in the last months. I see the unfolding events as world-shaking. Somehow, twice, a column involving the U.S.A. president, has been canned. I thought them to be good columns. So, a difference of opinion, and I can appreciate that. I know that I am a passionate person with very definite ideas. And I am not alone.

Take my last *Intelligencer* column.

I WAS IN SAN DIEGO A few weeks ago, where its Board of Education must cut its budget by $150 million. The much smaller and poorer Buffalo board must pare its finances by $65 million. Something bizarre is happening from North to South in the world's richest country: it cannot provide basic public education for all its children. Let me re-phrase that: while hundreds of billions of dollars are spent on an oil-powered invasion, the U.S.A. refuses to adequately school its young people. Not only will its federal balance sheet be in negative territory, as deep as $400 billion, but many of its 50 states, too, suffer severe shortfalls: in prosperous Oregon teachers have agreed to work two weeks without pay, thus averting a plan to cut the school year — already the shortest among Western nations — by nearly five weeks.

Laments Bob Herbert in the *New York Times*: "It's an insane society that can contemplate devastating and then rebuilding Iraq but can't bring itself to provide schooling for all its young people here at home."

EDUCATION IS THE KEY to a better future. So are balancing the nation's books and preserving nature. If the future belongs to those who prepare for it, then America is in great danger, and we, in Canada, with it. I am only half-kidding when I say that we had better be careful. One more anti-American outburst by a politician here and the cry: "Iraq now, Canada next," may be heard. After all, we are America's biggest foreign oil and its principal natural gas supplier.

Is it all about oil? "Of course it's about oil," writes Norman Spector in a recent *Globe and Mail* column. "So was the first Persian Gulf war against Saddam Hussein. And why else did the Americans, and before them the British and the French, penetrate the region in the first place? Surely it wasn't for a chance to dip into the sea off Muscat, or visit the ruins at Palmyra."

According to the *New York Review of Books*, in his new tax plan — which will lead to large deficits and tax increases to be paid by the very children now deprived of a decent education — 50 per cent of all tax filers would receive $100 or less and two-thirds less than $500. Bush himself would save $44,500, Cheney $326,555 and the new Secretary of the Treasurer, John Snow, $600,000. The 226,000 richest tax filers will receive a benefit roughly equal in size to the 120 million tax filers with incomes below $100,000.

Reports Thomas L. Friedman, an award-winning writer (and in favor of the Iraq war): "Bush has some dangerous blind spots. Every day he asks us to ignore more and more troubling facts, and every day it seems more and more that Mr. Bush has mustered not a coalition of the willing, but rather, as one wag put it, 'a coalition of the billing.' It is very disturbing that so many of our 'allies' have to be bribed or bludgeoned into joining this war."

I SAW COLIN POWELL ON TV the other day. In 1992, he wrote: "Occupying Baghdad comes at an unpardonable expense in terms on money, lives lost and ruined regional relationships." Ever the good soldier, Colin Powell now has placed his reputation for honesty and forthright dealing in doubt, and if he has any self-respect, if the UN doesn't go along, he should resign. That's just what career diplomat John Brady Kiesling from the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece, did. His letter of resignation said: "The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. . . . We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security."

An invasion into the Muslim world will be seen as a war against Islam and will provide the best recruiting ground for militant fundamentalists. Turkey and France look beyond the war and fear that America is neither financially nor psychologically prepared to deal with an occupied Iraq in the long term. A wasp nest should be contained, not poked into.

End of the *Intelligencer* column, which goes under the title of "Yes, but . . ."

I AM EXPECTED AND want to offer a contrary opinion. You can find these columns on my web site: **www.geocities.com/hielemab**. If you are interested in receiving these, e-mail me at **hielema@ attcanada.net** .

I can see the concern of the editor. He has to make sure that people, in the difficult market situation any magazine finds itself in, renew, and I understand that. So, for the good of the magazine, I give up my column.

Let me end with some thoughts on the future. The book that is currently captivating me is *The Guns of August* by Barbara Tuchman. She describes the events leading up to and including the First World War. They are eerily similar to what it is now leading up to the Iraq war, which in history might be seen as the beginning of the End.

The First World War produced a book *Decline of the West* by a German philosopher, Oswald Spengler, which he started in 1918 and completed in 1922, and which my encyclopedia describes as "morbidly prophetic." In it he argues that all cultures are subject to the same cycle of growth and decay in accordance with pre-determined "historical destiny."

Dr. Kim Vicente, professor of engineering at the University of Toronto, drew my attention to this in a recent *Globe and Mail*. He quotes Spengler: "The last conflict is at hand in which Civilization receives its conclusive form — the conflict between money and blood." And later: "Man has become the slave of his creation. The machine has forcibly changed his habits in a direction from which there is no return." Later: "The private powers of the economy want free paths for the acquisition of great resources. No legislation must stand in their way. They want to make the laws themselves, in their interests, and to that end they have made for themselves, democracy, the subsidized party." Again an astonishing prophetic insight: "The destinies of this world economy are now decided in a few places, the 'money markets' of the world. Money is the form of intellectual energy in which the political and social, technical, and mental are concentrated. Every idea, to be actualized, has to be put in terms of money..... The freedom of public opinion involves the preparation of public opinion, which costs money; and the freedom of the press [editor take note] brings with it the question of possession of the press, which again is a matter of money; and with the franchise comes electioneering, in which he who pays the piper calls the tune."

SO LET ME END MY tenure with the Reformed Community in that sombre note. I have written columns under various headings; "Daily-bread economics," "Economic Housekeeping," "Reality Cheque," "The week that was," and finally "Nose for News." I also have nose-dived into some controversial issues, daring to think outside the box, not always provoking positive response.

So, my friends, Adieu.

I pray that I am successful in marketing my *Hereafter Tale*, which is a positive answer in a form of a love story set in the New Creation, to the "Left Behind" series, and which will, I am afraid, not prove as popular as the "Rapture" volumes, which makes God into a liar, having created an imperfect world. That's what going to heaven really means.

I must admit I take this step with a touch of sadness. I have tears in my eyes as I write this.

Editor's reply:

Bert's opinions are not at all the issue. He and I agree that attacking Iraq is not a wise move. As the editor, however, when Bert, for example, questions whether Bush is a Christian, I must ask him to provide some evidence.

Again and again Bert has proceeded not by way of evidence and argument but by way of innuendo and simply by repeating the same opinion forwards and backwards and quoting others who share his opinion. That's not responsible journalism. That does not deepen our understanding; that only clouds it.

I've asked Bert on more than one occasion to write in a more responsible way, and did so once again. Bert chose to quit instead.

Quite a number of us will miss his unique, raspy voice. On more than one occasion I have defended him from his detractors by insisting that there's a "prophetic side" to his diatribes. But even the Old Testament prophets trotted out proof for their judgments, reams of it.

We wish Bert the very best of God's blessings, and we're sure he will continue to be a gadfly for truth in the body of Christ.

Harry

Food..? For Thought..??

To tell one's deepest secrets to everybody is foolish and can be destructive.

To tell *no one* is even worse and may destroy us from within.

Self-discovery of Imprisoned Persons

Casey Vander Stelt
'Born From Experience'
(905) 385-9261

Classifieds

Classifieds

As of May 1999:
Note: 7% GST will be added to all prices listed below.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, thirteen days prior to publication date.

RATES

All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) + GST (columns are two inches wide). Display advertising re.: businesses and organizations: minimum $18.20 P.I. + GST, depending on design and frequency.

PHOTOS

There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.

PERSONAL ADS

Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $35. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce the birth of a child in our paper. Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.

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Mail: *Christian Courier*
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St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7
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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style.
b) Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

Thank You

Fred and Alie Abma
with their children want to thank every one who sent us cards, flowers, gifts, and best wishes with our 50th wedding anniversary.
It was greatly appreciated.
God bless you all.

Event

GOSPEL ELVIS CONCERT
Saturday, **March 29**, 2003
Doors open 6 p.m.
Concert begins 7 p.m.

Niagara Celebration Church
310 Scott St.
St. Catharines
Tickets: $5 advance
$7 at door

Fundraiser for:
PRISON REVIVAL MINISTRIES
and
OVERCOMERS ADDICTION CENTRE

Anniversaries

1953 April 15 2003
Kampen Edmonton

"But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his steadfast love." Psalm 33:18

With thanks to God for his great faithfulness and love, we joyfully announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents:

WILLEM and ANNEKE VANDENBERG (nee Breet)

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you for each other and for us, your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild.
Congratulations and love:
Jan & Marilyn VanDenBerg
Bradley, Melinda & Kyle (Justin), Ashley, Glenda
William & Anna VanDenBerg
Elizabeth, Janet, William, Andrew
Jeanette & Jack Vooys
Brian, Karen, Elaine
Annette & Ard VanHeerde
Ryan, Kayleigh
(all of Edmonton, AB)

You are invited to share our joy at an Open House to be held on Saturday, April 12, 2003 from 2-4 p.m. at Inglewood CRC, 12330-113 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta.
Best Wishes only please.
Mailing address: 8732-163 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5Z 3K5

1953 April 9 2003

Isaiah 50:11a

With praise and thanksgiving to God for His unfailing love and rich blessings, we wish to announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

JOHN and SIENE LINDEBOOM (nee TAEKEMA)

We pray that God will continue to be with you and bless you for many more years to come.
Much Love and Congratulations from:

John & Florence Lindeboom
Sheila & Greg, Jonathan

Martha & Paul Bouffard
Sharon, Aimee, Rachelle

Nancy & Ron Linker
Stephanie, Melissa, Kristen

We also remember, with love, Kathy Lindeboom, who went to be with the Lord 21 years ago.

We would like to celebrate with family and friends at an Open House on Saturday, April 12, 2003, D.V. at the Christian Reformed Church, Superior St, Wyoming, Ont. from 2-4 p.m.
Best wishes only please.
Home Address:
P.O. Box 77
Wyoming ON N0N 1T0

1953 April 2 2003

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High" Psalm 92:1

With thanks to God for His steadfast love and faithfulness, we rejoice and celebrate, with our parents,

LUBERTUS and JOHANNA (Bert & Jo) OOSTERHOF

their 50 years of marriage
You are invited to share our joy at an Open House to be held Saturday April 5 from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Brockville, Ont. Best Wishes only please.

Leo & Susan - *Brockville*
Wilma - deceased in infancy
Henry & Evelina - *North Augusta*
Alex & Julie - *North Augusta*
Gary & Corina - *Kingston*
Diane & John VandeMeent - *Bowmanville*
Annette & Rob Schreuders - *Rockton*
Paul & Wilma - *Inkerman*
22 grandchildren, 1 great- grandchild

Mailing address:
10622 Jellyby Road R.R.# 4
North Augusta ON K0G 1R0

1978 **April 8** 2003
Mississauga Harriston

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:33

With thanksgiving and praise to God for His faithfulness and blessing, we are pleased to announce the 25th Wedding Anniversary of our parents:

JOHN and IRMA DEVRIES (nee Munnik)

Congratulations Dad & Mom!
Sarah DeVries & Wayne Sutherland (fiancée) - *Hamilton, ON,*
Joyce DeVries & Tim Holmes (friend) *Guelph, ON*
Brian DeVries - *Guelph, ON*
Teresa DeVries - at home
Home address:
5237 Line 13 Minto Twp.
R. R. #4 Harriston ON N0G 1Z0

A Dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Ref. Church **April 20 at 3p.m.**

Rev. G. Procee Preaching

Obituaries

Febuary 21, 1920 March 4, 2003
Eestrum Bowmanville
Holland Ontario

DENNIS (THEUNIS) POSTHUMUS

In His time, God took home our dear husband, father and grandfather after a brief illness.
Tilly Posthumus (nee Van der meer)
Ralph & Linda Posthumus
Eric and Chelsea
Joanne Posthumus
Paul & Diane Posthumus
Kelsey, Jessica, Kurtis, Jake, Danny
Henry Posthumus
Correspondance Address:
48 Parkway Cres
Bowmanville, On L1C 1C1

ROELY MEINDERTSMA (nee Geerlinks)

of Guelph, passed away at the Guelph General hospital, Thursday, March 6, 2003, in her 80th year.
Beloved wife of Pier. Loved mother of Shirley and husband Doug Killens of Guelph and Murray Meindertsma and friend Kim of R.R. 1 Acton. Loving grandmother of Matthew, Jeremy and Taylor. Dear sister of Harm (Anna) Geerlinks of Fenwick, Margje (Jilt) Visser of Holland, Betty (Harry) Roffel of Brampton, Stella (John) Hofman of Georgetown, Kay (Dave) Sikkema of Brampton and sister-in-law of Lise and Terry Geerlinks. Predeceased by brothers Albert and Geert Geerlinks.
Funeral service was held at the Wall-Custance Funeral Home & Chapel, 206 Norfolk St., Guelph.
Memorial contributions to the Canadian Diabetes Association, P.O.Box 12013, Stn Brm B, Toronto, M7Y 2L3 or a charity of choice would be appreciated.

Church Events

50th Anniversary
Walking with God through the years.
BETH-EL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
365 Queen St. E. Acton, Ont.
hopes D.V. to celebrate its 50th anniversary on
Saturday and Sunday May 10 & 11, 2003.
Former pastors and members are invited to join us on Saturday from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. for a Social Hour at the church to be followed by a banquet and evening program at the Curling Club on Churchill Rd. 1/2 mile N. of the church. On Sunday a special thanksgiving service will be held.
Call for further information:
519-853-0991 or e-mail:
Kenk@maple.ca
RSVP for banquet before April 20th.
A limited number of anniversary books will be available.

Dutch Community Easter Song Service on Sunday **April 20th** at 7:30 p.m. at the Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock.** Rev. Roeland Hartmans officiating. Babysitting provided. Refreshments served after the service.
We Hope that You All Can Come!

Church Events

The Christian Reformed Church of Medicine Hat, Alberta, will be celebrating its **50th anniversary** on **May 17 & 18, 2003 D.V.**
On Saturday, May 17th, there will be registration at 10 a.m. followed by a **banquet** at 1:30 p.m. in the Medicine Hat Christian School gymnasium located at 68 Rice Drive S.E. At 7:30 p.m. there will be a **program** at the Christian Reformed Church located at 300 Primrose Dr. S.E. On Sunday, May 18, we will have **special services** at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the church with former pastors participating.
All former members and friends are cordially invited to join us in our celebrations. Please RSVP. Those who plan to attend the Saturday banquet are asked to reply by April 27. Phone Ina at **403-526-5522** or e-mail Bill: **wmslof@telusplanet.net**

The Calvin Christian Reformed Church of Ottawa, Ontario will be celebrating **50 years** of God's grace and faithfulness on May 3 & 4, 2003. Weekend activities include a dinner, program and services of celebration.
All former members and friends are welcome.
For more information please contact the Church Office at
613- 225-2889 or office@calvincrc.ca

The Transcona CRC
(Winnipeg, Manitoba)
will be celebrating its
50th Anniversary.
A weekend of praise, thankgiving and fellowship is planned for
October 10 - 14, 2003.
All former and present members and friends are welcome to join us in this celebration. For more information call:
Bev Steendam at **204-853-2150** or
E-mail: jsteenda@mts.net

"How Priceless is God's Unfailing Love"
Bethel CRC
of **Lacombe, Alberta**
will be celebrating their
50th anniversary.
A weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship is planned for
December 5, 6, & 7, 2003.
All former and present members and friends are invited to join us in this celebration.
For more information, call:
Eleanor Wildeboer at **403-782-2602**
or e-mail: wilelwildeboer@aol.com

Concert of Praise
Dr. John Vandertuin will be presenting an evening of organ, piano and vocal music, featuring some of the great masters of the keyboard and his own arrangements, Sat. **Mar. 29, 8 p.m.**, at the Rehoboth United Reformed Church, 77 Glancaster Rd. Ancaster.
$10 at the door.
Information: **(905)765-6124**

Classifieds

Teachers

PONOKA, Alberta
Ponoka Christian School, a small Christian school located 1 hour south of Edmonton, Alberta, invites applications for definite openings in our **primary and junior high divisions** and a **possible** opening in our **intermediate** division for the 2003/2004 school year. Applicants should be committed Christian teachers with un understanding of and commitment to reformed Christian education. Please direct inquiries and/or applications to:
Mr. R. Duggan, Principal
403 783-6563 or
fax a resumé to 403 783-6687.

BOWMANVILLE, Ontario
Durham Christian High School
Positons in :
French and Art
School Year 2003/2004
Inquires to:
Mr. Fred Spoelstra, Principal
Durham Christian High School
340 Scugog St.
Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K2
Telephone: 905-623-5940
Fax: 905-623-6258
E-mail: principal@dchs.com

CLAREMOUNT, Ontario
Stouffville Christian School is committed to providing our students with a Christ-centred education. We challenge students to pursue a life of Godly character and personal and academic excellence. A position is available for a dynamic individual to utilize their gifts in a **Grade 7/8** teaching setting. You need to have experience in teaching French, have computer skills, and a Christian University/college education.
Fax resume to 905-640-7845 or
E-mail: stouffville_cs@hotmail.com
or **Stouffville Christian School**
565 Uxbridge-Pickering Townline
Claremount, ON L1Y 1A3

CHATHAM, Ontario
Chatham Christian High School invites teachers, who demonstrate a passionate love for God and young people, to join our team. We are a growing school in a modern facility, supported by a strong Christian community. We seek applications for the **2003-2004** school year for a definite opening in Science and possible openings in other subject areas.
Please address your letter of application and resume to:
John Van Pelt
Chatham Christian High School
475 Keil Dr. South
Chatham ON N7M 6L8
Ph: 519-352-4980 Fax: 519-352-4041
E-mail:
johnvanpelt@chathamchristian.ca

OTTAWA, Ontario
Due to an expanding student population the **Ottawa Christian School** is seeking qualified applicants for a definite openings in the **primary, junior** and **intermediate** levels for September of 2003. We will **also** have a definite opening for a **French** teacher in the junior and intermediate level. If you love Christ and his children, have an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, a Christian School Teacher's Certificate or their equivalents and are interested in being part of a dynamic and growing team of educators we look forward to hearing from you. An interest in physical education would be considered an asset. Please send your resume and a statement of faith to:
Paul Triemstra, Principal
Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave.
Ottawa ON K2A 1P6
Tel/Fax: (613) 722-5836
E-mail: paul@ocschool.org
Website: www.ocschool.org

SMITHERS, British Columbia
Bulkley Valley Christian School, a school of 485 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of BC., invites applications for **principal** at its **elementary campus**, effective August 1, 2003. This campus has approximately 200 students from K-5. Bulkley Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix. The school also invites applications for the following **teaching positions** for the **2003 - 2004** school year: **intermediate** (Gr. 3-5), Gr. 7, **middle and/or high school** French. Applications and inquiries for these positions can be forwarded to:
John Buikema Elementary Principal
Bulkley Valley Christian School
P.O. Box 2117
Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0
Ph: 250-847-9833
Fax: 250-847-0184

DELTA, British Columbia
Delta Christian School is accepting applications for **Principal**. DCS is a Preschool-Grade 7 school of approximately 225 students. Ideal candidate should have excellent interpersonal , communication and leadership skills. Please include resume, statement of faith and educational philosophy. This position will start Aug./2003.
Please send applications to:
Darrell Renkema, Board Chair
Delta Christian School
4789 53 Street
Delta, BC V4K 2Y9
For more info call school office at **(604) 946 2514** or visit **www.deltachristianschool.com**

Check out our website for JOB OPPORTUNITIES taken from the latest issues of *Christian Courier*: www.christiancourier.ca/Jobs.htm

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF BRAMPTON, ONTARIO,
founded in 1959, today has a staff of 22 serving a student body of over 300 from Junior Kindergarten to grade 8.
To find out more about our school please visit our web site at **www.bramptonjkcs.org**.

We currently have the following openings:
1. Maternity leave opening - Grade 5 (60%) and Library (20%) effective early May 2003 to end of school year.
2. Two Maternity leave positions for the 2003/2004 school year at the junior level. One of these positions will be an 80% position and may include 20% library responsibilities. A specialty in French would be an asset.
3. Possible openings at the primary, junior and senior level for the 2004 school year. We operate on a rotation basis in the senior grades. Specialties in French and/or Phys. Ed. would be an asset.

If you would like to pursue any of these positions, please forward your resume to Christine Van Noord, at **jkcvan@bramptonjkcs.org**, as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Toronto District Christian High School

Teachers needed for:
English
English/drama
Computers
Guidance with another teachable

td christian

Qualifications: certification, passion for working with teenagers, competent in the field, dynamic Christian.
Send resume and references to **principal@tdchristian.ca** or to **377 Woodbridge Ave., Woodbridge, Ontario L4L 2V7**

For more information please check the jobs page on our web site *www.tdchristian.ca.*

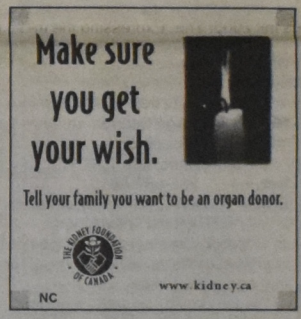
Job Opportunity

Half Time Ministries Coordinator – New position in **Classis Toronto**.

Classis Toronto is seeking a high energy, Spirit driven leader. The coordinator will be responsible to work with local churches by promoting ministry opportunities. The successful applicant should have a passion for empowering the church, be a self- starter able to work within a flexible schedule, have web management skills and the ability to communicate effectively with congregations and ministry partners.

For further job description and submission of resume contact **Rev. Nick Overduin, Stated Clerk, at 416-938-9520 or email nickoverdn@aol.com.**
Deadline for resumes is **June 15/03**.

Miscellaneous



Miscellaneous

TIME FOR NEW FURNITURE?

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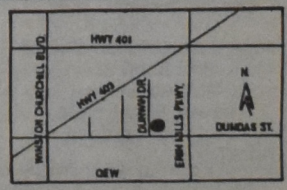
... for that special item!

Our "coil" spring furniture has all the support and comfort you need.



Mississauga, Dundas St. — 2 Blocks W. of Erin Mills Parkway (905) 828-9511

Classifieds

Miscellaneous

Buchanan headlines national Christian writers conference

Award-winning Canadian author Mark Buchanan will be the keynote speaker at the 19th annual God Uses Ink Christian Writers' Conference, June 12 to 14 in Guelph, Ont. Buchanan, a pastor/author from Duncan, B.C., will explore the theme "Expressing the Invisible."

Classes have been designed for all levels of experience, from aspiring to professional writers. More than 40 experts on faculty will offer a wealth of knowledge about the Canadian and American publishing scenes, both mainstream and Christian. Most will be available for personal appointments with attendees.

Organizers fully expect to sell out this year, and so they recommend getting registrations in early. Capacity this year is 240. Registrants can choose from six continuing classes, each providing five hours of in-depth instruction. Attendees may also attend four shorter workshops and panels, selecting from 24 topics. Other conference features include manuscript critiques, worship times, readings, a bookstore and the presentation of The Word Guild 2003 Canadian Writing Awards honouring writers who are Christian.

Teenagers or adults in three age categories who have never been published could win free registration to God Uses Ink 2003. The "Expressing the Invisible" contest is open until April 15.

Writers who have never had a book published, but who have a manuscript they would love to see in print, can enter the Castle Quay/Essence contest for first-time authors. The deadline for entries is April 15.

Continuing session topics are "What every aspiring writer needs to know" with author N. J. Lindquist and friends; "Writing for children" with widely-published author Mona Gansberg Hodgson; "Non-fiction book creation from the ground up" with Cook Communications' acquisitions editor W. Terry Whalin; "Interactive fiction intensive" with Canadian authors Hugh Cook and Linda Hall; "Making the move from amateur to professional" with Cecil (Cec) Murphey, author of 85 books; and "Take your writing to the top level" with journalist and professor Lois Sweet.

Workshop topics include "What authors need to know about agents" with agent Les Stobbe, "How to get a publishing house to look at your manuscript" with Waterbrook Press vice president Don Pape, "How your personality affects your writing" with coach Marg Buller, panels with editors and publishers, forums for journalists and authors, and more.

Last year's conference was sold out and received very positive reviews from the more than 200 people attending. Organizers have increased the capacity for this year, but expect every place to be filled.

The God Uses Ink conference is organized and sponsored by The Word Guild, a one-year-old association with the mandate of connecting, developing and promoting writers and editors who are Christian. For more information on the conference or the contests, see full details at **www.thewordguild.com**

Job Opportunities

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

In **Windsor, Ontario**, a K-12 school, is looking for one excellent teacher who will further develop a resource program.

The 50% **RESOURCE POSITION** will increase as the program proves itself but a
FULL TIME POSITION is available by adding classroom teaching time.
Level Two or Three certification is preferred.

Contact us electronically to receive a Maranatha Application Form; then send the completed form and complete resume to:

William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
939 Northwood St., Windsor, ON N9E 2B4
Phone: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519
Email: office@maranathachristian.ca
Web: http://www.maranthachristian.ca

Help Seniors Enjoy Life!

Do you have planning and organizational skills?
Would you like to serve in a Christian environment?

Holland Christian Homes in Brampton
has an immediate opening for a **part-time assistant** to serve the recreational needs of seniors living in our five (soon to be six) apartment towers.
Your work will include planning special events, organizing bus trips and involving the community in our Home.
Currently, the position is two days per week with additional two days available in May.
For further information please contact
Jon Masselink at 905-459-3333
or email at **jonma@hch.ca.**

YOUTH DIRECTOR/PASTOR

The three Christian Reformed Churches of Sarnia, Ontario are seeking a **full time Youth Director/Pastor** to continue a unique and exciting combined youth ministry. Solid programming & commiteed volunteer leadership is already in place. Candidate must have strong relational and administrative skills plus the desire and ability to lead and equip our youth, helping them to grow in faith and service to our Lord.

Please send resume and inquiries to:

Art Capelle,
2261 Confederation Sarnia ON N7T-7H3
519-337-4660 or email: artc@rivernet.net

Senior Pastor

The **First Christian Reformed Church of Chilliwack**, located 60 miles/ 100 kilometres east of Vancouver, BC, in the beautiful Fraser Valley, seeks a **Senior Pastor** for our congregation of 580 members. We pray that the Lord will provide a pastor who can, by solid biblical preaching and by example, help us toward our goal of "helping people to know and serve Jesus". Our Sunday services are changing gradually from traditional to more contemporary, with growing member participation. The Senior Pastor will have a significant voice in the calling of an associate pastor as we proceed with plans to develop an effective team ministry.
For a job description and a church profile please contact our Search Committee Chairman, **Norman Brouwer at 604-792-9380**
or e-mail: normbrouwer@hotmail.com

Miscellaneous

Would 7% to 10% lifetime income appeal to you?

Over 65? Charitable Gift Annuities can provide these rates, largely tax-free and ultimately benefit the charities of your choice.
Please ask for a confidential, no obligation quotation.

NEW.. NEW.. NEW.. NEW..

Effective January 1, new rules provide an immediate charitable receipt of approx. 20% - 25% for all charitable gift annuities. *Our Rates have not changed.* If you've been thinking about getting a quotation, this is the time to do it! No obligation, call or write today!

Link Charity Canada Inc.
45 Harriet St. Toronto M4L 2G1
Ph: 416-410-4244 **Fax: 416-465-6367**
www.linkcharity.ca info@linkcharity.ca

For Sale or Rent

DUNCAN CHRISTIAN SENIOR HOME SOCIETY
Unit #2 at Evening's Ease Court
1015 Trunk Road, **Duncan, B.C.**

2 BR, 1 ½ Bath, 991 sq. ft.
Asking $132,900. or $775./mo.
For more information visit website:
http://senior.hopto.org/seniorhome
Or telephone: Bill (250) 743-9276
George (250) 748-1257

Job Opportunity

SHALOM MANOR, a 132 bed Christian Long Term Care facility, serving Dutch-Canadian seniors in **Grimsby**, requires a

Director of Resident Care

Reporting to the CEO, you will be responsible for the total administration, organization and management of the Nursing Department; accountable for financial viability; planning and decision making at the senior management team level; managing human and material resources; policy and procedure development; continuing education and training of nursing staff; Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management.

Qualifications Required - Bachelor of Science Nursing Degree or equivalent with 3 - 5 years management experience in a long-term care setting; current registration as a Registered Nurse with the College of Nurses of Ontario; excellent interpersonal, creative problem-solving, conflict resolution and leadership skills; post graduate education and clinical experience in Gerontological Nursing; relevant literacy in computers. Ability to communicate in the Dutch language, and the completion of a Health Management Program or other related courses would be an asset.

Please forward a detailed resume in writing, by fax, mail or email, no later than 4 pm, Friday, **April 4, 2003** to:

Chris Rynberk, CEO Shalom Manor
12 Bartlett Ave.
Grimsby ON L3M 4N5
Fax: 1-905-945-1211 E:mail: shalomman@interlynx.net
For more information about Shalom Manor and its culture, or this position, please visit our website at : **www.shalommanor.ca** or call **905-945-9631, Ext 240.**

Shalom Manor appreciates all responses. However, only applicants chosen for an interview will be contacted.

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

ASSOCIATE PASTOR
New Life Church,
a dynamic, cell-based, contemporary and multi-staff church in **Abbotsford, British Columbia**, is looking for a full-time associate pastor. Are you someone who loves to preach, who loves to equip others for leadership, and who loves people? If you are and you are able to function at a senior staff level in a team environment - then we want to hear from you!
Please send your enquiries &/or resume, to: **Elsie Bakker**
ebakker@newlife.crc.ca
or fax 604-852-1554

Wanted: **licensed plumber** for full time position. Excellent salary and benefits. Residential new construction, remodeling and service.
Call **Plympton Plumbing**, Wyoming, Ontario
519-845-3726

Travel

DCA Travel & Cruise
♦Holiday Packages ♦Cruises ♦Flights
ON SALE
TORONTO 416-224-5211
BRADFORD 905-775-6763
Toll-free 1-800-667-2525
E-mail: info@dca-travel.com
Best insurance coverage-lowest price

Event

Celebrate spring at the
Chapel Singers Easter Concert
Saturday, April 12, 7:30 p.m. at Queen St. Baptist Church, 57 Queen St., St. Catharines, Ont. Tickets available at the door: $10 each, $25 per family.
Refreshments to follow. Please join us.

Miscellaneous

PRODUCT SAFETY INFORMATION

Is your child safe?

(NC)—Your home is a haven where your children are, or should be, safe from harm. Children are naturally curious and don't easily recognize hazards. They need extra protection from danger. Supervising your children carefully and making their surroundings safe can prevent many burns, poisonings, cuts and bruises.

For information on how to do this, visit Health Canada's web site at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/psp.

- News Canada

REDEEMER University College
is accepting applications for a full-time

Development Officer

Reporting to the Executive Director of the Redeemer Foundation, the Development Officer will be responsible for maintaining and increasing donor support through the planning and implementation of various strategies and support actives to achieve revenue objectives.

For details, check out the *job opportunities* quick-link on our website at **www.redeemer.on.ca**

Please direct inquiries to:
Human Resources Director, Redeemer University College,
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4
Tel: 905-648-2131 x4230

Applicants are encouraged to fax or email their application materials.
Fax: 905-648-2134; Email: jvgeest@redeemer.on.ca
All serious replies are appreciated. However, only candidates invited for interviews will be contacted.

Miscellaneous

MAKE THIS YOUR LAST WINTER TO SHOVEL SNOW!

shalom EVERGREEN TERRACE

Built and managed by a Christian community non-profit organization, all operating costs are budgeted at the lowest break-even point to keep monthly fees to a minimum.

NOW IS THE TIME TO RESERVE YOUR NEW HOME!
Select suites available from $150,900

OPEN HOUSE: TUES.- SAT. 1- 4 P.M.
CALL (905) 945-9208
www.EvergreenTerrace.ca
275 MAIN STREET EAST, GRIMSBY

EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS HORIZONS
You can advertise in *Christian Courier*'s Business and Service Directory once a month for only: $25 + GST. Call: 1-800-969-4838 for details.

Miscellaneous

The world urgently seeks wise, grounded leadership. ICS equips Christian leaders around the world through integrally Christian Masters and Ph.D. programs.

reGeneration! The Campaign for ICS will help ICS expand its service by investing in students and reaching out around the globe through new media and electronic resources.

Contact or visit us online to see how you can participate.

reGeneration!
The Campaign for ICS

ICS
INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Christian Graduate Education
www.icscanada.edu 1-866-979-9777

Events

25th Anniversary Celebration
WATERLOO CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
is holding celebrations on Saturday, April 19th
W C R C in honour of 25 years as a congregation.
There will be an Open House from 1-4 p.m.
and a Dinner and Program at 6 p.m.
Tickets for the dinner are $20. per person.
All events are held at the Waterloo CRC
"Church in the Woods" - 209 Bearinger Rd., Waterloo.
For more information or to order tickets call Nelda Looyenga 519-746-5727 or email office@wcrc.on.ca

REDEEMER University College

The Fifth Biennial Christian Schools Science Fair

hosted by the Sciences Division at Redeemer University College

Thursday, April 10, 2003 at 7:30pm,
"Magic of Molecules"
Dr. David Humphreys, professor emeritus from McMaster University will present his entertaining show involving chemical reactions in Redeemer's auditorium. Free admission. Suitable for all ages.

Friday, April 11, 2003, noon to 7 pm,
"Open House for Exhibition of Science Projects"
Grade 7 and 8 elementary school students from across the province display their science fair projects at Redeemer University College.

For more details: cs.redeemer.on.ca/scifair
1-877-779-0913 or 905-648-2131

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Mar 28	Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Sioux Center**, IA 7:30 B.J. Haan Aud.
Apr 5	**Family Outreach Ontario Conference**. Theme: Sharing Strength and Hope for Recovery from chemical dependencies. Keynote Speaker: Glenn Allan. Bethel CRC, **Newmarket**. 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Apr 5	Spring Concert of Praise by the Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Leendert Kooij director, Andre Knevel, organ; in the Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church, **Guelph** @ 7:30 Tickets $10, Children under 12 - Free. Call (519) 821-9384.
Apr 10,11,12	Students of **London** District Christian Secondary School present The Beams are Creaking, a historical drama based on the life of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Time: 8 p.m. See ad Mar 31 issue.
Apr 10	**Christian School Science Fair** - Opening program with "The Magic of Molecules" 7:30 pm Redeemer University College auditorium, **Ancaster**, Ont.
Apr 11	Open House - Christian School Science Fair exhibits, from noon until 7pm. Redeemer University College
Apr 12	Spring Concert of Praise by the Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Leendert Kooij director, Andre Knevel, organ; in the **Springdale** CRC @ 7:30. Tickets $10, Children under 12 – Free. Call (905) 775-2230.
Apr 20	A **Dutch Service** will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr Ref Church 3 p.m. Rev. G. Procee preaching
Apr 20	**Dutch Community Easter Song Service** 7:30 p.m. at the Emmanuel Reformed Church 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock**, Rev. Roeland Hartmans officiating. Babysitting & Refreshments. All welcome!
Apr 25	**27th Annual Ontario Christian High School Choral Festival**, choirs from Beacon, Chatham, Hamilton, London, Nepean, Toronto featured individually and as a Mass Choir. Centenary United Church, **Hamilton** (next to Hamilton Place).
Apr 26	Forest Christian Reformed Church in **Forest**, Ontario, will celebrate 50 years of blessings. Program will begin at 6:30 PM with Open House to follow. Dinner tickets are available. Call (519)786-4082.
Apr 26	Spring Concert of Praise by the Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Leendert Kooij director, Andre Knevel, organ; in the King St. United Church, **Trenton** @ 7:30 p.m. Tickets $10, Children under 12 – Free. Call (613)392-4110
Apr 26	Festival of Praise for Male Choirs. Redeemer University College Auditorium, **Ancaster**, ON. $15 per person. Ph: 905-389-2104
Apr 26	**Salem**, 40 years of service, evening of celebration & praise with Grace & Colleen, Unity Music Ministries 7 - 8:30 p.m. at Faith CRC, **Burlington**, Ont. See ad next issue for details.
Apr 26, 27	Zion Christian Reformed Church, **Pembroke**, Ont., 50th anniversary. Sat. - tea social, banquet, evening program. Sun. - thanksgiving service. Call (613) 582-3263 for info & banquet. See ad Mar.3 issue.
May 3	Calvin Christian School, 547 West 5th St. **Hamilton**, Ont. Celebrating 50th anniversary. Open house at the school from 11a.m. – 3 p.m. Dinner at Michelangelo's Banquet Ctr. At 6:30 p.m. $40.00 pp. Social at 5:30. To order tickets, send names & cheque to Ena Mostert, 22 Ambassador Dr. Hamilton, ON L9C 2N8
May 3	Sarnia Christian School, **Sarnia**, Ont. 50th anniversary. 2-4 p.m. - open house. Dinner/program 5:30 Contact 519-383-7750 or odolphi@lkdsb.net See ad March 3 issue.
May 3	Liberation Choir Concert, Hamilton Place, **Hamilton** with Guelph Symphony Orchestra. 7:30 pm. See ad
May 3,4	First CRC, of Orillia, Ont. 50th Anniversary. For info & dinner tickets, call Andy Mast 705-484-9976 e-mail andrew.mast@sympatico.ca or Jackie Taylor 705-325-0161 See ad Mar. 17 issue
May 3,4	The Calvin Christian Reformed Church of **Ottawa**, Ont. 50 year anniversary. Weekend activities include a dinner, program, services. For info: 613-225-2889 or email: office@calvincrc.ca See ad Mar 31 issue
May 11,12	Beth-El CRC 365 Queen St. E. **Acton**, Ontario, 50th anniversary. Sat. 3:00 p.m. for a Social Hour, then a banquet & evening program. Sunday – special thanksgiving service. For info: 519-853-0991 E-mail kenk@maple.ca (RSVP re Banquet) See ad this issue
May 16,17,18	The Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of **Edmonton**, Alberta, 50th anniversary For more info, visit our website: members.shaw.ca/maranatha_edmonton.50th/ For banquet tickets call Edie Boonstra at 780-477-8617 or email: maranatha_edmonton.50th @shaw.ca
May 17,18	The CRC, **Medicine Hat, AB**, 50th anniversary. Saturday, registration at 10 a.m., banquet at 1:30 p.m & a program at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, special services at 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. Ph: 403-526-5522 or email Bill: wmslof@telusplanet.net

10th ANNIVERSARY

LIBERATION CHOIR CONCERT

Conductor: Willem van Suijdam

With the

Guelph Symphony Orchestra

Conductor: Simon Irving

Organ & Grand Piano: Andre Knevel

Soprano Soloist: Colleen Greidanus

SATURDAY MAY 3, 2003 - 7:30 P.M.

At

Hamilton Place, Hamilton, Ontario

For tickets call: *905-631-1929*

Or e-mail: paula@organs.ca Tickets: $25.00 / $35.00

Spring Concerts of Praise

by the

Choirs, concert band & Kooij Sisters

of the

Ontario Christian Music Assembly

Under the direction of ***Leendert Kooij***

With ***Andre Knevel*** *at the organ* ***7:30 p.m.***

ADMISSION: *Adults $10.00 Children under 12 – FREE*

April 5	April 12	April 26
Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church GUELPH	Springdale CRC BRADFORD (905)775-2230	King St. United TRENTON (613)392-4110

(519)821-9384 (For all concerts call OCMA (416)636-9779)

An Annual Tradition for 20 Years

Festival of Praise for Male Choirs

Hear 150 men sing!

7:30 PM – Saturday, April 26, 2003

Redeemer University College Auditorium

777 Garner Road E, Ancaster, ON

Ambassadors, Hamilton

The Choraliers, Brampton

Collegium Musicum, St. Catharines

The Crusaders, Springdale

Guelph Male Choir

COME AND BE INSPIRED!

Tickets $15.00 per person – ask your local choir members or call 905-389-2104

Did you know?

(NC)—Did you know that the most common type of diabetes can be prevented or at least postponed? By leading a healthy lifestyle you can dramatically reduce the likelihood of getting type 2 diabetes. Inactivity and a poor diet put you at a much higher risk of developing diabetes and the serious health problems that come with it. For information on how to lead a healthy life, visit Health Canada's website at www.healthcanada.ca/diabetes and the Canadian Diabetes Association web site at www.diabetes.ca.

- News Canada

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The Beams are Creaking

Based on the life of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Written by Doug Anderson

Directed by Tim Luimes

April 10, 11, 12 8p.m.

Tickets: $10 ($9 per 10+)

24 Braesyde Avenue, London N5W 1V3

Contact: LDCSS students or school office at

519-455-4360

Check out *Christian Courier* online at: www.christiancourier.ca

Send your event and family ads to *Christian Courier* at: ads@ christiancourier.ca

The Living Word

Sermons for reading services.

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News

Camp offers a welcome break to kidney patients

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Kidney diseases can be debilitating for many people, but a camp in northern Ontario run by the Lions Club offers kidney patients the opportunity to enjoy an outdoor summer holiday in a beautiful natural setting, with no worries about medical treatment.

Lions Camp Dorset is based in Dorset, Ont. – deep in the Muskoka region close to Algonquin Park. Although started more than 20 years ago, it is not widely known except among kidney patients.

John Suk, of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, has been to the camp several times and highly recommends it. Suk has been a kidney patient for five years, and must get dialysis three times a week. But because of Camp Dorset, he and his wife, Anky, have been able to enjoy week-long outdoor holidays for several summers.

"The whole camp is built by Lions Clubs from various towns," he explains. Individual clubs have each paid for the building of cottages onsite. "They offer these cottages at a low price," Suk reports. All 14 cottages have three bedrooms. There are also nine "efficiency units" – similar to bachelor apartments, and six trailer sites.

The scenic waterfront at Lions Camp Dorset.

Kidney Foundation helps camp

Partnering with the Lions Club is the Kidney Foundation of Canada, which subsidizes the cost of patients' visits to the camp by $200 for a one-week stay. Therefore, patients need only pay about $175 for a one-week stay. In addition, anyone who has a hard time raising that money can apply for further help from the Kidney Foundation Patient Assistance Program.

Patients usually stay for a week at a time, says Suk. The camp is open each year from the last week in June until the end of August, and also on the Thanksgiving weekend.

Camp Dorset features a tennis court, a mini golf course, and a lakefront with a beach, an air-conditioned lounge, and an indoor pool. The camp offers swimming lessons, ceramics, children's crafts, and a movie night. Canoeing, kayaks and fishing is available on Deer Lake, right next to the camp. For rainy days, there is a library with "oodles of books," says Suk, and evening activities such as cards and a dance.

However, there are no chapel meetings or similar spiritually-focused activities at the camp – "one thing I as a Christian lack," observes Suk. But there are churches in the nearby town of Dorset.

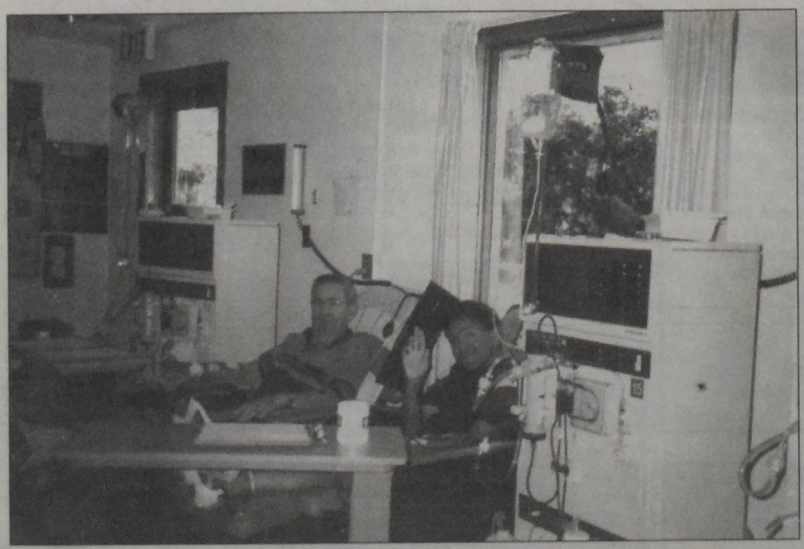
One important aspect of Camp Dorset is its dialysis unit onsite, which provides campers who have renal (kidney) failure with dialysis three times a week. According to the camp's web site, campers must be a dialysis patients in Ontario and be evaluated by the proper medical professionals before being approved.

The camp itself is a non-profit organization and "continues to be supported by the Lions and Lioness Clubs of Ontario... and not just financially," reports the camp's web site. "Today, as in the past, groups of volunteers from clubs around the province give their time and experience to build new projects and upgrade the old. Starting from three cottages, with dialysis being performed in the back of a converted school bus, Camp Dorset has grown to three and a half million dollars worth of assets, all of which are dedicated to enhancing the dialysis patient's vacation experience.... The services provided continue to grow, while the client's cost has been kept to a minimum."

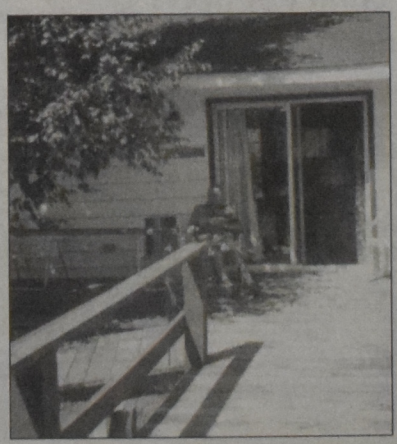
Only such camp in Ontario

The camp is also supported financially by the Kidney Foundation, some other non-profit organizations, and some corporate sponsors. According to the Kidney Foundation, Camp Dorset is the only such camp in Ontario, and hosts about 250 patients each summer. Each Ontario branch and chapter of the foundation contributes $200 for each patient from their area who attends the camp for up to one week.

"Being somewhat remote, we find that there is often a preconception that our facilities are as rugged as the environment we are located in," observes the foundation, in a press release. "We are often told how pleasantly surprised staff and clients are when they first see Camp Dorset's medical centre." The clinic features 16 hemodialysis stations and 20 Fresenius dialysis machines, and can accommodate up to 32 clients per treatment day.



John Suk (left) and a friend undergo dialysis at Camp Dorset.



John Suk relaxes at the camp.

News Digest

Pet lion turns heads

HOLEDEC NA LOUNSKU, Czech Republic (Ananova) – A Czech cat lover gets plenty of attention when he walks the street – with Leon his pet lion. Jaroslav Kana bought Leon as a cub, and says his pet has given many a dog a fright as he walks him around the town centre and local parks twice a day.

Kana says, "Dogs catch his scent and come running round the corner of the street dragging their owners, but then they stare Leon in the face, turn round and head back the other way even faster. Leon just starts roaring and pawing the ground as if he's about to spring loose, but that's because he wants to play with the dogs. But I don't think the owners are too sure, so I just have to make sure I keep him on a tight lead."

Leon is now taken for granted by locals in the town of Holedec na Lounsku. Kana even leaves him tied up outside the local supermarket when he does his shopping. He is allowed to walk him as laws regarding the keeping of such animals are far looser in most eastern European countries.

Climber survives great fall

SNEZKA MOUNTAIN, Czech Republic (Ananova) – A climber who survived a 1,700-foot fall from a mountainside brushed himself off and climbed back to the peak. Czech mountain rescuers looked on in amazement as the man picked himself up after his fall from the side of the 5,300-foot Snezka mountain in the north of the country.

Valerian Spusta, a member of the mountain rescue team, said: "He was up on the mountain, and according to what he told us, he had wanted to take advantage of the sunny day and take pictures. He probably stepped to one side while looking through the lens of his camera and just flew down the side. We all stared at him in amazement. It was a real miracle that he didn't die."

The climber, who has not been identified, was later seen on top of the mountain after his second attempt at reaching the peak.

Rare fish emerges

TORONTO – A British woman caught a rare oarfish larger than she was last month, while angling for mackerel. The fish was a skinny giant, being more than 11 feet long, and weighing 140 pounds, more than the weight of Val Fletcher. She recounts, "Just as you thought you had it out of the water, a bit more would emerge. It was actually a bit scary." Unfortunately for marine scientists, the fish was sliced up and put in Fletcher's freezer.

The oarfish, also known as a sea serpent, can reach 50 feet in length and swims vertically, like a seahorse, reports the *Globe and Mail*. It can swim as deep as 3,000 feet, and plummets downward "like a dropped sword," according to observers.